WRITING, READING, AND COLLEGE SUCCESS: A FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION COURSE FOR ALL LEARNERS

Athena Kashyap & Erika Dyquisto
City College of San Francisco

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Writing, Reading, and College Success:

A First-Year Composition Course for All Learners

Athena Kashyap & Erika Dyquisto

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About the Authors

Meet the Authors

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Athena grew up in India and went to the U.S. for her higher education, where she received her BA in Critical Social Thought and History from Mount Holyoke College, her MA in English from the University of California at Davis, and her MFA in Poetry from San Francisco State University. She also completed certificates in Teaching Post-Secondary Reading and Writing at SFSU. She currently lives in San Francisco where she teaches English at City College of San Francisco.

Athena has written two collections of poetry, *Sita's Choice* (2019) and *Crossing Black Waters* (2012), both published by Stephen F. Austin State University Press in Nagadoches, TX. Her poems have appeared in *Exquisite Corpse, All Roads Lead You Home*, *The Missing Slate*, *Forum*, *The Fourth River* among other journals. Her work has also been anthologized both in the U.S. and India and has been translated into other languages.

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A San Francisco native, Erika attended local public schools and San Francisco State University for her B.A. in English Literature and M.A. in English with a concentration in teaching post-secondary writing. She worked as an editor and editorial manager in the financial industry for a number of years before a second career in education, a career she cherishes. She continues working as a writing coach in the financial industry, as well as teaching in City College's English Department and SFSU's College of Business, but she also has fun writing poems, which are occasionally published in journals. Her LinkedIn profile can be found at: www.linkedin.com/in/erikadyquisto/.

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About the Book

Writing, Reading and College Success: A First Year Composition Course for All Learners

by Athena Kashyap & Erika Dysquito

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Goal

The goal for this textbook was to revise and adapt the open educational resource (OER) textbook, *Writing for Success* so that the revision met the current needs of California Community College students. We succeeded in meeting our goal by adding additional scaffolding for developmental and ESL learners to help them with reading, writing, and college success skills; materials for learning in multiple modalities; teacher resources; and expanded materials about the reading and writing process. This in-depth revision allowed us to combine pre-collegiate level English instruction along with first year composition materials. We have not only fulfilled all that we said we would do in our initial proposal but, in addition, expanded the focus to all potential learners in a first year college composition course.

Review of Results and Implementation

As a result of the passing of AB 705, students are no longer required to take placement tests that might require them to take several Basic Skills classes. Instead, they are now placed directly into first-year composition along with other learners with higher skill levels. To address the wide disparity in skill levels, we wanted to create/adapt a text book that had information for learners of all levels. To achieve this, we expanded the scaffolded instruction for developmental and ESL learners, as well as the reading and writing sections, elaborating on the reading-writing connection. At the same time, to make the course challenging for learners who would traditionally have placed into first-year composition, we discussed writing in the context of rhetoric so that students could start thinking about how essay writing relates to persuasion and argumentation.

We also expanded the Writing Process section so that we could include more resources in each of the different stages of writing so that students and instructors might have more resources to help them understand each step in the process. To bring writing to the forefront, we moved the grammar section back while including more material suitable for English language learners, and made reading and writing the focus of the book, a process which entailed a thorough restructuring of the book.

Many students taking first-year composition in their very first semester lack college success skills. To help these students become better equipped to embrace challenges in college, we added more resources to the chapter on college success, including expanding the time management section. Lastly, many teachers are ill-equipped to teach students who are at very different skill levels in the same classroom. We created a sample outline for them showing how the different topics and units might be scaffolded as needed to suit learners at both the basic skills and regular levels.

Guided Pathways

Guided pathways were created so that students can make conscious choices that help them reach their goals. We addressed guided pathways with two new sections on Writing in the Age of Technology and Writing as Conversation. The former emphasizes the importance of writing and the skills one acquires for work by writing essays. In Writing as Conversation, we make writing much more accessible by connecting writing to joining a conversation. We also interspersed the text with Writing at Work tips to show

how writing essays has real-world applications.

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Preface

This textbook is intended to replace the current, often cost-prohibitive textbooks assigned for required first-year composition classes at California community college campuses. It is meant to be a one-stop-shop for all introductory material. We hope this textbook has lived up to its ethos to be more affordable (free), accessible, equitable, and culturally relevant. If this textbook fails to meet your needs in any way, please accept our apologies and send your suggestions to akashyap@ccsf.edu or edyquisto@ccsf.edu.

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Instructor Guide: How to Use This Textbook

Access

This e-book is available for free to all of your students. It can also be converted to .pdf and printed, or be ordered as a class text through your institution's bookstore, most likely at a very low price (check with your bookstore).

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Use

The goal for this textbook was to revise and adapt the open educational resource (OER) textbook, *Writing for Success* so that the revision met the wide-ranging current needs of California community college students. We added additional scaffolding for developmental and English Language Learners to help them with reading, writing, and college success skills; materials for learning in multiple modalities; teacher resources for lesson planning and level appropriateness; and expanded materials about the reading and writing process. This in-depth revision allowed us to combine pre-collegiate level English instruction along with more traditional first year composition materials.

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Student Guide: How to Use This Textbook

How to Use This Textbook

Dear student,

Congratulations on enrolling in a first year composition class!

This book is designed to be:

- Free
- Convenient
- Accessible
- Easy to use
- Reasonably easy to understand
- Interesting
- Thought provoking

How to Read and Annotate this Textbook

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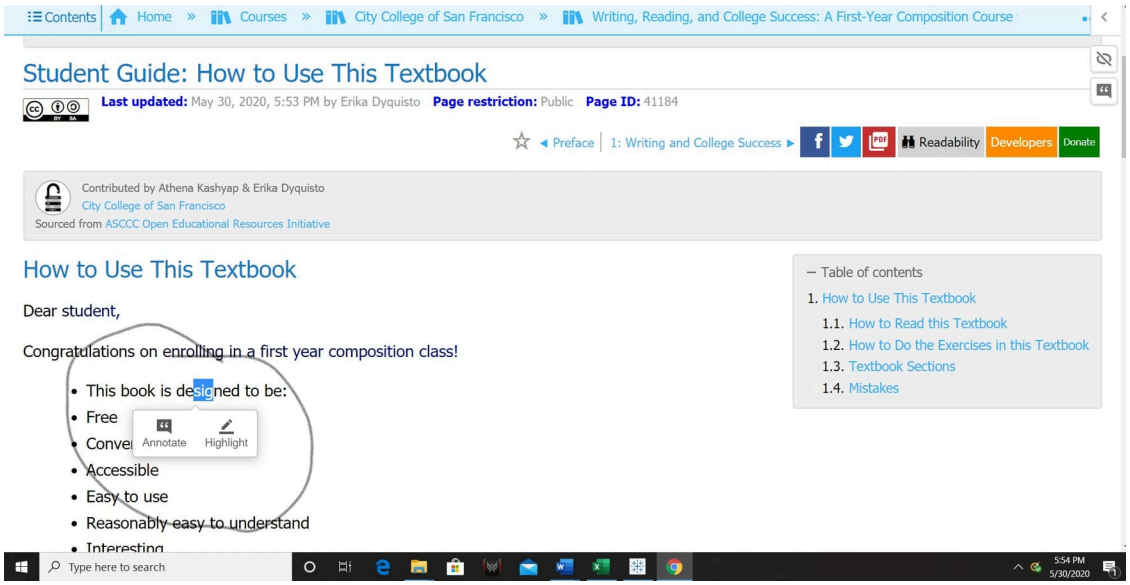

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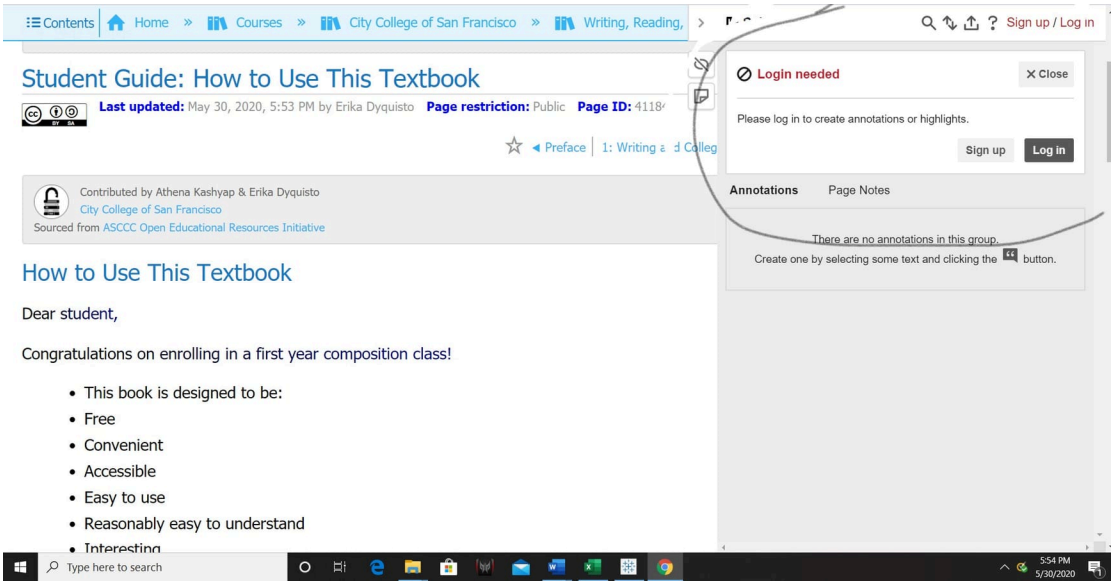

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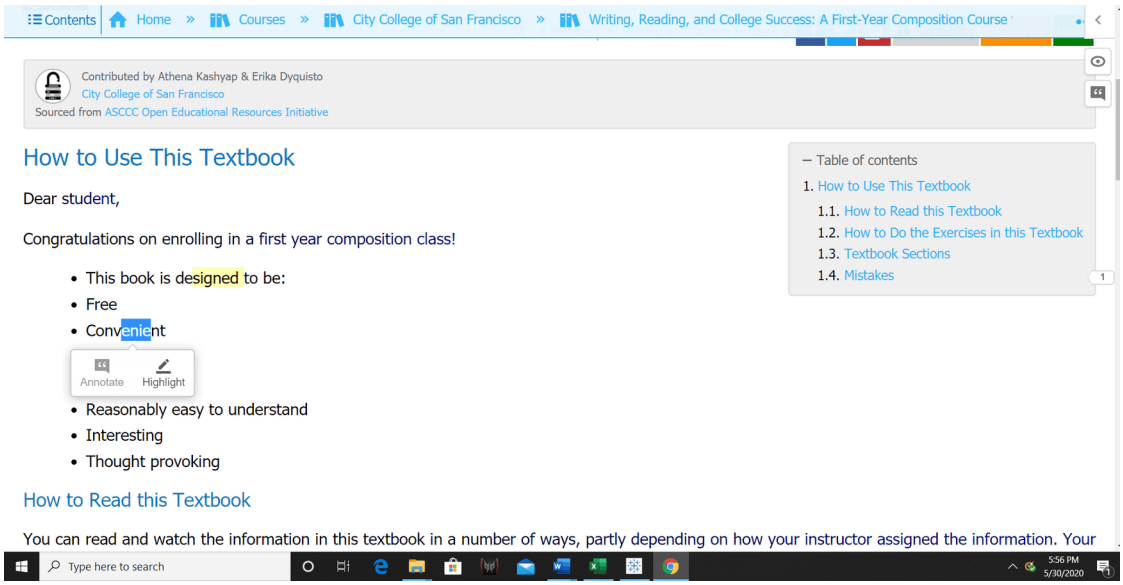

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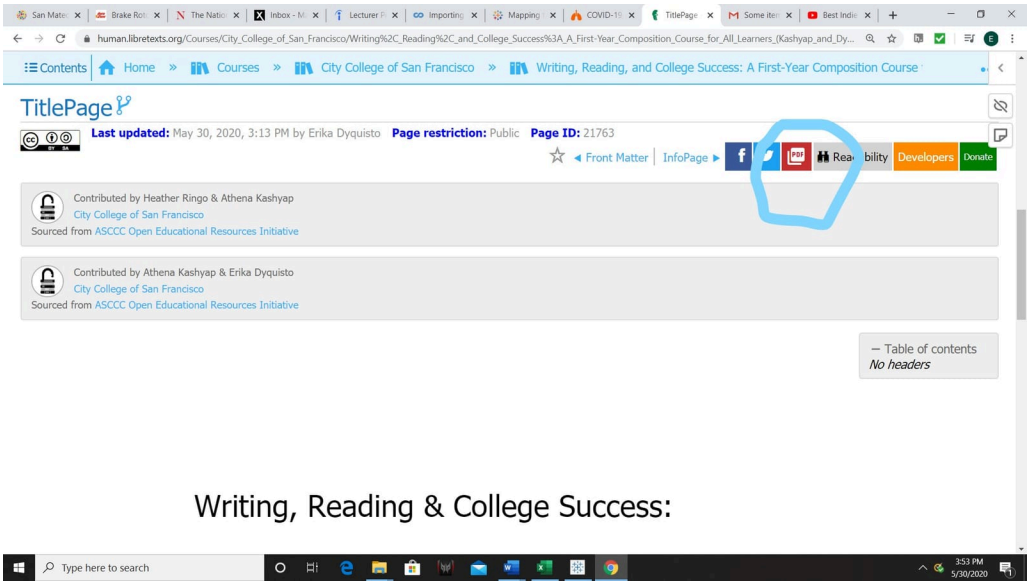

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You can do the textbook exercises your instructor assigned you by copying and pasting the exercise onto your computer and then typing in the answers. In some cases, the exercises may also be available in a file attached to the page, which you can download. The exercises are not hooked up with Canvas, as that option isn't currently technically feasible. Please check with your instructor to see if they have a preferred way for you to work on and turn in the exercises.

How to Search this Book

The best way to search this book is to go to the Table of Contents, choose the chapter title for what you think you are looking for, and then click on the subtitle of the item you need.

Textbook Sections

This textbook has twelve chapters for students to use:

1. Writing and College Success (College reading and writing expectations, as well as time management)

2. Writing and the Art of Rhetoric (Writing as conversation, critical thinking, logical fallacies, rhetorical analysis)

3. The Reading and Writing Connection (Reading and questioning strategies, vocabulary, and spelling)

4. Prewriting (The reading-writing process and strategies for preparing to write)

5. Thesis Statements, Topic Sentences, and the First Draft

6. Body Paragraphs (Development and working with sources)

7. Revising and Editing

8. Argumentation (Paragraph types, types of argumentation)

9. Creating Presentations and Sharing Ideas

10. Adding to the Conversation with Research Papers

11. Clarity, Conciseness, and Style

12. Grammar

Mistakes and Suggestions

If you notice any errors or you have any suggestions for improving the textbook, please send your thoughts and suggestions to akashyap@ccsf.edu or edyquisto@ccsf.edu. Just like you seek to learn and grow as a writer and scholar, so do we wish to continuously improve this textbook. It is a work in progress! Thank you for reading, and we hope this resource allows you a deepened understanding of and appreciation for the reading-writing process.

Respectfully,

Athena Kashyap, Erika Dyquisto, and the entire *Writing, Reading & College Success team*

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1: WRITING AND COLLEGE SUCCESS

1.1: Writing in an Age of Technology
1.2: Becoming a Successful College Student
1.3: Understanding Yourself as a Learner
1.4: Time Management
1.5: Key Takeaways

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1.1: Writing in an Age of Technology

In an age where technology, finance, and business reigns, you might ask about the relevance of writing and learning how to write essays. Knowing how to write is an essential skill that is as relevant today as ever! A recent survey of employers, conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, found that **89 percent** of employers believe that colleges and universities should place more emphasis on teaching students to "effectively communicate orally and in writing" (Seligo). Writing was the only 'most-favored' skill in this survey. In addition, several of the other valued skills mentioned by employers are grounded in written communication:

- "Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills" (81 percent of employers)
- "The ability to analyze and solve complex problems" (75 percent of employers)
- "The ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources" (68 percent of employers).

If you want to be professional, you need to interact frequently with others. You have to be someone who can **anticipate and solve complex problems and coordinate your work with others**. Whether you're in business, an entrepreneur, or in a corporation, all of these skills depend on effective communication.

Figure: from Pixabay

Taking these ideas a step further, CEO of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, has done away with PowerPoint presentations altogether and has reverted back to writing longer essay-style memos. In a famous email sent out to his employees on June 9, 2004, he explains why: "The reason writing a 4-page memo is harder than "writing" a 20-page PowerPoint is because the narrative structure of a good memo forces better thought and better understanding of what's more important than what, and how things are related." At a typical Amazon meeting, employees present a long narrative style memo detailing their ideas. During the first part of the meeting everyone is silent, reading the memo and taking notes, before discussing the memo. The act of writing and annotating, whether it is in business or technology, forces the writer to think through ideas fully.

The process that Amazon employees use to write memos and sharpen their ideas is not much different than that used by students in first year composition classes. In college writing classes, students study specific topics in depth, research ideas, and then, in a process that involves planning, reading, writing, researching, and revising, present their ideas in a well-organized format. This process is used in writing an essay. Most of the writing that we will be doing in a first year Composition class is expository, detailing and explaining a theory. Students will learn how to make a statement and convince their readers about its validity using logic and persuasive writing.

All these skills are what companies are looking for in their future employees, whether these employees are working in technology, finance, the arts, or business. Jeffrey Seligo, author of *College Unbound*, writes about the dearth of college graduates with these skills. He writes, "Hiring managers complain that they often find today's college graduates lacking in interpersonal skills, problem

solving, effective written and oral communication skills, the ability to work together in teams, and critical and analytical thinking" and that employees who have the ability to "come up with novel solutions to problems and [are] better able to sort through information to filter out the most critical pieces are the ones who will be of great value." Writing expository essays in college will help build critical thinking and inter-personal skills as students work in groups to debate their ideas and fine-tune their essays based on helpful feedback from their instructor and, often, peers.

By taking first year college composition, you are on the way to becoming a better thinker and writer -- skills that can make you highly desirable, both as an employee but also for your own self-development as the benefits of learning how to write go beyond getting a job. Writing effectively helps to expand your world by making you think critically about issues in the news. And it enables you to make more informed decisions as a member of a family or a community.

Now that we have established the need for learning how to write effectively, a process that goes hand-in-hand with reading and critical thinking, let's get started with making sure we have all we need to succeed in the course.

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1.2: Becoming a Successful College Student

A Personal Definition of College Success

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.

So, 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 having difficulty in or failing in college courses usually has nothing to do with intellect. More often success depends on how fully a student embraces and masters the seven strategies outlined later in this section.

Exercise 1

Free-write on what success means to you in college and beyond. You might want to consider the following:

- What people do you consider to be successful and why?
- What is your definition of success?
- What will you do to achieve success?
- What is the biggest change you need to make in order to be successful in college?
- How will you know you've achieved success?

Finally, remember 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

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

Video 1.2.1: Ted Talk video

Strategies to Achieve Success

Considerable research into college success reveals that **intellect usually has nothing to do with having difficulty with, 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 the office after 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, don't feel you're not smart enough for college; ask yourself if you can implement some of these skills.

TIP

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 among these 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. ... Kristen Mruk, in *The Student Experience,*" writes "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!"

Study Time

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 1.2.1: Image from Pixabay

You can also add a tutor to your study group. You will notice a positive difference. Tutoring is generally free in college, and the strategies and knowledge you gain will be invaluable. Usually tutors have previously 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 intellect or 'smarts', but because of poor time management, disorganization, and lack of quality study time. You can combat this by creating a regular study schedule, studying in groups, taking advantage of

your school's academic resources such as a tutoring center, instructor office hours, and any available online help.

Exercise 2

- Click here to view the Instructional Support presentation from California Community Colleges. It includes an audio overview of success in college.

Why Go To Class?

Students don't always want to go to class. They may have required classes that they find difficult or don't enjoy, or they may feel overwhelmed by other commitments or feel tired if they have early morning classes. However, even if instructors allow a certain number of unexcused absences, you should aim to attend every class session. Class attendance enhances class performance in the following ways:

- **Class participation**: If you don't attend class, you can't participate in class activities. Class activities are usually part of your final grade, and they can help you apply concepts you learn from lectures and reading assignments.
- **Class interaction**: If you rely on learning on your own (by doing the reading assignments outside of class, for example), you'll miss out on class discussions with fellow students. Your classmates will often have the same questions as you, so going to class enables you to learn from them and ask your instructor about topics you all find difficult.
- **Interaction with the instructor**: There is a reason why classes are taught by instructors. Instructors specialize in the subjects they teach, and they can provide extra insight and perspective on the material you're studying. Going to class gives you the chance to take notes and ask questions about the lectures. Also, the more you participate, the more your instructors will come to know you and be aware of any help or support you might need. This will make you feel more comfortable to approach them outside of class if you need advice or are struggling with the course material.
- **Increased learning**: Even though you will typically spend more time on coursework outside of the classroom, this makes class sessions even more valuable. Typically, in-class time will be devoted to the most challenging or key concepts covered in your textbooks. It's important to know what these are so you can master them—also they're likely to show up on exams.

Exercise 1.2.1

Let's compare students with different attitudes toward their classes:

1. Carla wants to get through college, and she knows she needs the degree to get a decent job, but she's just not that into it. She's never thought of herself as a good student, and that hasn't changed much in college. She has trouble paying attention in those big lecture classes, which mostly seem pretty boring. She's pretty sure she can pass all her courses, however, as long as she takes the time to study before tests. It doesn't bother her to skip classes when she's studying for a test in a different class or finishing a reading assignment she didn't get around to earlier. She does make it through her freshman year with a passing grade in every class, even those she didn't go to class very often. Then she fails the midterm exam in her first sophomore class. Depressed, she skips the next couple classes, then feels guilty and goes to the next. It's even harder to stay awake because now she has no idea what they're talking about. It's too late to drop the course, and even a hard night of studying before the final isn't enough to pass the course. In two other classes, she just barely passes. She has no idea what classes to take next term and is starting to think that maybe she'll drop out for now.

2. Karen wants to have a good time in college and still do well enough to get a good job in business afterward. Her sorority keeps a file of class notes for her big lecture classes, and from talking to others and reviewing these notes, she's discovered she can skip almost half of those big classes and still get a B or C on the tests. She stays focused on her grades, and because she has a good memory, she's able to maintain OK grades. She doesn't worry about talking to her instructors outside of class because she can always find out what she needs from another student. In her sophomore year, she has a quick conversation with her academic advisor and chooses her major. Those classes are smaller, and she goes to most of them, but she feels she's pretty much figured out how it works and can usually still get the grade. In her senior year, she starts working on her résumé and asks other students in her major which instructors write the best letters of recommendation. She's sure her college degree will land her a good job.

3. Alicia enjoys her classes, even when she has to get up early after working or studying late the night before. She sometimes gets so excited by something she learns in class that she rushes up to the instructor after class to ask a question. In class discussions, she's not usually the first to speak out, but by the time another student has given an opinion, she's had time to organize her thoughts and enjoys arguing her ideas. Nearing the end of her sophomore year and unsure of what to major in given her many interests, she talks things over with one of her favorite instructors, whom she has gotten to know through office visits. The instructor gives her some insights into careers in that field and helps her explore her interests. She takes two more courses with this instructor over the next year, and she's comfortable in her senior year going to him to ask for a job reference. When she does, she's surprised and thrilled when he urges her to apply for a high-level paid internship with a company in the field—that happens to be run by a friend of his.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Stages of the Listening Process

Listening is a skill of critical significance in all aspects of our lives, from maintaining our personal relationships, to getting our jobs done, to taking notes in class, to figuring out which bus to take to the airport. Regardless of how we're engaged with listening, it's important to understand that listening involves more than just hearing the words that are directed at us. Listening is an active process by which we make sense of, assess, and respond to what we hear.

The listening process involves five stages: receiving, understanding, evaluating, remembering, and responding. These stages will be discussed in more detail in later sections. Basically, an effective listener must hear and identify the speech sounds directed toward them, understand the message of those sounds, critically evaluate or assess that message, remember what's been said, and respond (either verbally or nonverbally) to information they've received.

Effectively engaging with all five stages of the listening process lets us best gather the information we need from the world around us.

Active Listening

Active listening is a particular communication technique that requires the listener to provide feedback on what he or she hears to the speaker, by way of restating or paraphrasing what they have heard in their own words. The goal of this repetition is to confirm what the listener has heard and to confirm the understanding of both parties. The ability to actively listen demonstrates sincerity, and that nothing is being assumed or taken for granted. Active listening is most often used to improve personal relationships, reduce misunderstanding and conflicts, strengthen cooperation, and foster understanding.

When engaging with a particular speaker, a listener can use several degrees of active listening, each resulting in a different quality of communication with the speaker. Active listening can also involve paying attention to the speaker's behavior and body language. Having the ability to interpret a person's body language lets the listener develop a more accurate understanding of the speaker's message.

Stage 1: The Receiving Stage

The first stage of the listening process is the receiving stage, which involves hearing and attending.

Hearing is the physiological process of registering sound waves as they hit the eardrum. As obvious as it may seem, in order to effectively gather information through listening, we must first be able to physically hear what we're listening to. The clearer the sound, the easier the listening process becomes.

Paired with hearing, attending is the other half of the receiving stage in the listening process. Attending is the process of accurately identifying and interpreting particular sounds we hear as words. The sounds we hear have no meaning until we give them their meaning in context. Listening is an active process that constructs meaning from both verbal and nonverbal messages.

The Challenges of Reception

Listeners are often bombarded with a variety of auditory stimuli all at once, so they must differentiate which of those stimuli are speech sounds and which are not. Effective listening involves being able to focus in on speech sounds while disregarding

other noise. For instance, a train passenger that hears the captain's voice over the loudspeaker understands that the captain is speaking, then deciphers what the captain is saying despite other voices in the cabin. Another example is trying to listen to a friend tell a story while walking down a busy street. In order to best listen to what she's saying, the listener needs to ignore the ambient street sounds.

Attending also involves being able to discern human speech, also known as "speech segmentation." Identifying auditory stimuli as speech but not being able to break those speech sounds down into sentences and words would be a failure of the listening process. Discerning speech segmentation can be a more difficult activity when the listener is faced with an unfamiliar language.

Stage 2: The Understanding Stage

The second stage in the listening process is the understanding stage. Understanding or comprehension is "shared meaning between parties in a communication transaction" and constitutes the first step in the listening process. This is the stage during which the listener determines the context and meanings of the words he or she hears. Determining the context and meaning of individual words, as well as assigning meaning in language, is essential to understanding sentences. This, in turn, is essential to understanding a speaker's message.

Once the listeners understands the speaker's main point, they can begin to sort out the rest of the information they are hearing and decide where it belongs in their mental outline. For example, a political candidate listens to her opponent's arguments to understand what policy decisions that opponent supports.

Before getting the big picture of a message, it can be difficult to focus on what the speaker is saying. Think about walking into a lecture class halfway through. You may immediately understand the words and sentences that you are hearing, but not immediately understand what the lecturer is explaining or whether what you're hearing at the moment is the main point, side note, or digression.

Understanding what we hear is a huge part of our everyday lives, particularly in terms of gathering basic information. In the office, people listen to their superiors for instructions about what they are to do. At school, students listen to teachers to learn new ideas. We listen to political candidates give policy speeches in order to determine who will get our vote. But without understanding what we hear, none of this everyday listening would relay any practical information to us.

One tactic for better understanding a speaker's meaning is to ask questions. Asking questions allows the listener to fill in any holes he or she may have in the mental reconstruction of the speaker's message.

Stage 3: The Evaluating Stage

This stage of the listening process is the one during which the listener assesses the information they received, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Evaluating allows the listener to form an opinion of what they heard and, if necessary, to begin developing a response.

During the evaluating stage, the listener determines whether or not the information they heard and understood from the speaker is well constructed or disorganized, biased or unbiased, true or false, significant or insignificant. They also ascertain how and why the speaker has come up with and conveyed the message that they delivered. This may involve considerations of a speaker's personal or professional motivations and goals. For example, a listener may determine that a co-worker's vehement condemnation of another for jamming the copier is factually correct, but may also understand that the co-worker's child is sick and that may be putting them on edge. A voter who listens to and understands the points made in a political candidate's stump speech can decide whether or not those points were convincing enough to earn their vote.

The evaluating stage occurs most effectively once the listener fully understands what the speaker is trying to say. While we can, and sometimes do, form opinions of information and ideas that we don't fully understand—or even that we misunderstand—doing so is not often ideal in the long run. Having a clear understanding of a speaker's message allows a listener to evaluate that message without getting bogged down in ambiguities or spending unnecessary time and energy addressing points that may be tangential or otherwise nonessential.

This stage of critical analysis is important for a listener in terms of how what they heard will affect their own ideas, decisions, actions, and/or beliefs.

Stage 4: The Responding Stage

The responding stage is the stage of the listening process wherein the listener provides verbal and/or nonverbal reactions based on short- or long-term memory. Following the remembering stage, a listener can respond to what they hear either verbally or non-verbally. Nonverbal signals can include gestures such as nodding, making eye contact, tapping a pen, fidgeting, scratching or cocking their head, smiling, rolling their eyes, grimacing, or any other body language. These kinds of responses can be displayed purposefully or involuntarily. Responding verbally might involve asking a question, requesting additional information, redirecting or changing the focus of a conversation, cutting off a speaker, or repeating what a speaker has said back to her in order to verify that the received message matches the intended message.

Nonverbal responses like nodding or eye contact allow the listener to communicate their level of interest without interrupting the speaker, thereby preserving the speaker/listener roles. When a listener responds verbally to what they hear and remember—for example, with a question or a comment—the speaker/listener roles are reversed, at least momentarily.

Responding adds action to the listening process, which would otherwise be an outwardly passive process. Oftentimes, the speaker looks for verbal and nonverbal responses from the listener to determine if and how their message is being understood and/or considered. Based on the listener's responses, the speaker can choose to either adjust or continue with the delivery of her message. For example, if a listener's brow is furrowed and their arms are crossed, the speaker may determine that she needs to lighten her tone to better communicate her point. If a listener is smiling and nodding or asking questions, the speaker may feel that the listener is engaged and her message is being communicated effectively.

Stage 5: The Remembering Stage

In the listening process, the remembering stage occurs as the listener categorizes and retains the information she's gathered from the speaker for future access. The result–memory–allows the person to record information about people, objects, and events for later recall. This happens both during and after the speaker's delivery.

Memory is essential throughout the listening process. We depend on our memory to fill in the blanks when we're listening and to let us place what we're hearing at the moment in the context of what we've heard before. If, for example, you forgot everything that you heard immediately after you heard it, you would not be able to follow along with what a speaker says, and conversations would be impossible. Moreover, a friend who expresses fear about a dog she sees on the sidewalk ahead can help you recall that the friend began the conversation with her childhood memory of being attacked by a dog.

Remembering previous information is critical to moving forward. Similarly, making associations to past remembered information can help a listener understand what she is currently hearing in a wider context. In listening to a lecture about the symptoms of depression, for example, a listener might make a connection to the description of a character in a novel that she read years before.

Using information immediately after receiving it enhances information retention and lessens the forgetting curve or the rate at which we no longer retain information in our memory. Conversely, retention is lessened when we engage in mindless listening, and little effort is made to understand a speaker's message.

Because everyone has different memories, the speaker and the listener may attach different meanings to the same statement. In this sense, establishing common ground in terms of context is extremely important, both for listeners and speakers.

The Learning Cycle

Too many students try to get the grade just by going to class, maybe a little note taking, and then cramming through the text right before an exam they feel unprepared for. Sound familiar? This approach may have worked for you in high school where tests and quizzes were more frequent and teachers prepared study guides for you, but colleges require you to take responsibility for your learning and to be better prepared.

Most students simply have not learned how to study and don't understand how learning works. Learning is actually a cycle of four steps:

- Preparing
- Absorbing
- Capturing

- Reviewing

When you get in the habit of paying attention to this cycle, it becomes relatively easy to study well. But you must use all four steps.

Listening and note taking are closely related. Good listening skills make you a better note taker, and taking good notes can help you listen better. Both are key study skills to help you do better in your classes.

Effective Listening Strategies

Are you a good listener? Most of us like to think we are, but when we really think about it, we recognize that we are often only half listening. We're distracted, thinking about other things, or formulating what we are going to say in reaction to what we are hearing before the speaker has even finished. Effective listening is one of the most important learning tools you can have in college. And it is a skill that will benefit you on the job and help your relationships with others. Listening is nothing more than purposefully focusing on what a speaker is saying with the objective of understanding.

This definition is straightforward, but there are some important concepts that deserve a closer look. "Purposefully focusing" implies that you are actively processing what the speaker is saying, not just letting the sounds of their voice register in your senses. "With the objective of understanding" means that you will learn enough about what the speaker is saying to be able to form your own thoughts about the speaker's message. Listening is an active process, as opposed to hearing, which is passive.

You listen to others in many situations: to interact with friends, to get instructions for a task, or to learn new material. There are two general types of listening situations: where you will be able to interact freely with the speaker (everyday conversations, small discussion classes, business meetings) and where interaction is limited (lectures and Webcasts).

In interactive situations, you should apply the basic principles of active listening. These are not hard to understand, but they are hard to implement and require practice to use them effectively.

Principles of Active Listening

1. **Focus** on what is being said. Give the speaker your undivided attention. Clear your mind of anything else.
2. **Don't prejudge** or assume you already know the material. You want to understand what the person is saying; you don't need to agree with it.
3. **Repeat what you just heard**. Confirm with the speaker that what you heard is what he or she said.
4. **Ask the speaker to expand or clarify.** If you are unsure you understand, ask questions; don't assume.
5. Listen for **verbal cues** and watch for **nonverbal cues**.Verbal cues are things your instructor says that communicates the importance. Examples are, "this is an important point" or "I want to make sure everyone understands this concept." Your instructor is telling you what is most important. Nonverbal cues come from facial expressions, body positioning, arm gestures, and tone of voice. Examples include when the instructor repeats herself, gets louder, or starts using more hand gestures.
6. **Listen for requests.** A speaker will often hide a request as a statement of a problem. If a friend says, "I hate math!" this may mean, "Can you help me figure out a solution to this problem?"

Listening in a classroom or lecture hall to learn can be challenging because you are limited by how, and how much, you can interact with an instructor during the class. The following strategies help make listening at lectures more effective and learning more fun.

1. **Get your mind in the right space.** Prepare yourself mentally to receive the information the speaker is presenting by following the previous prep questions and by doing your assignments (instructors build upon work presented earlier).
2. **Get yourself in the right space.** Sit toward the front of the room where you can make eye contact with the instructor easily. Most instructors read the body language of the students in the front rows to gauge how they are doing and if they are losing the class. Instructors also believe students who sit near the front of the room take their subject more seriously and are more willing to give them help when needed or to give them the benefit of the doubt when making a judgment call while assigning grades.
3. **Eliminate distractions**. There are two types of distractions: **internal and external distractions**.
    - Internal distractions are things like being hungry, tired, or distracted with other thoughts. Try to manage these by being well-rested and having a healthy meal before class.
    - External distractions are things like a ringing cell phone or people talking in the hallway. To manage these distractions, turn your cell phone off and pack it away in your backpack. If you are using your laptop for notes, close all applications except the one that you use to take notes.

4. **Look for signals.** Each instructor has a different way of telling you what is important. Some will repeat or paraphrase an idea; others will raise (or lower) their voices; others will write related words on the board. Learn what signals your instructors tend to use and be on the lookout for them. When they use that tactic, the idea they are presenting needs to go in your notes and in your mind—and don't be surprised if it appears on a test or quiz!
5. **Listen for what is not being said.** If an instructor doesn't cover a subject or covers it only minimally, this signals that that material is not as important as other ideas covered in greater length.
6. **Sort the information.** Decide what is important and what is not, what is clear and what is confusing, and what is new material and what is a review. This mental organizing will help you remember the information, take better notes, and ask better questions.
7. **Take notes.** We cover taking notes in much greater detail later, but for now, think about how taking notes can help recall what your instructor said and how notes can help you organize your thoughts for asking questions.
8. **Ask questions.** Asking questions is one of the most important things you can do in class. Most obviously it allows you to clear up any doubts you may have about the material, but it also helps you take ownership of (and therefore remember) the material. Good questions often help instructors expand upon their ideas and make the material more relevant to students. Thinking through the material critically in order to prepare your questions helps you organize your new knowledge and sort it into mental categories that will help you remember it.

What to Do If...

- **Your instructor speaks too fast.** Crank up your preparation. The more you know about the subject, the more you'll be able to pick up from the instructor. Exchange class notes with other students to fill in gaps in notes. Visit the instructor during office hours to clarify areas you may have missed. You might ask the instructor—very politely, of course—to slow down, but habits like speaking fast are hard to break!
- **Your instructor has a heavy accent.** Sit as close to the instructor as possible. Make connections between what the instructor seems to be saying and what he or she is presenting on the board or screen. Ask questions when you don't understand. Visit the instructor during office hours; the more you speak with the instructor the more likely you will learn to understand the accent.
- **Your instructor speaks softly or mumbles.** Sit as close to the instructor as possible and try to hold eye contact as much as possible. Check with other students if they are having problems listening, too; if so, you may want to bring the issue up with the instructor. It may be that the instructor is not used to the lecture hall your class is held in and can easily make adjustments.

Now That's a Good Question...

Are you shy about asking questions? Do you think that others in the class will ridicule you for asking a dumb question? Students sometimes feel this way because they have never been taught how to ask questions. Practice these steps, and soon you will be on your way to customizing each course to meet *your* needs and letting the instructor know you value the course.

- **Be prepared.** Doing your assignments for a class or lecture will give you a good idea about the areas you are having trouble with and will help you frame some questions ahead of time.
- **Position yourself for success.** Sit near the front of the class. It will be easier for you to make eye contact with the instructor as you ask the question. Also, you won't be intimidated by a class full of heads turning to stare at you as you ask your question.
- **Don't wait.** Ask your questions as soon as the instructor has finished a thought. Being one of the first students to ask a question also will ensure that your question is given the time it deserves and won't be cut short by the end of class.
- **In a lecture class, write your questions down.** Make sure you jot your questions down as they occur to you. Some may be answered in the course of the lecture, but if the instructor asks you to hold your questions until the end of class, you'll be glad you have a list of the items you need the instructor to clarify or expand on.
- **Ask specific questions.** "I don't understand" is a statement, not a question. Give the instructor guidance about what you are having trouble with. "Can you clarify the use of the formula for determining velocity?" is a better way of asking for help. If you ask your question at the end of class, give the instructor some context for your question by referring to the part of the lecture that triggered the question. For example, "Professor, you said the Union troops were emboldened by Lincoln's leadership. Was this throughout the Civil War or only after Gettysburg?"
- **Don't ask questions for the sake of asking questions.** If your question is not thought out, or if it appears that you are asking the question to try to look smart, instructors will see right through you!

Effective Participation Strategies

Like listening, participating in class will help you get more out of class. It may also help you stand out as a student. Instructors notice the students who participate in class (and those who don't), and participation is often a component of the final grade. "Participation" may include contributing to discussions, class activities, or projects. It means being actively involved. The following are some strategies for effective participation:

- **Be a team player**: Although most students have classmates they prefer to work with, they should be willing to collaborate in different types of groups. Teamwork demonstrates that a student can adapt to and learn in different situations.
- **Share meaningful questions and comments**: Some students speak up in class repeatedly if they know that participation is part of their grade. Although there isn't necessarily anything wrong with this, it's a good practice to focus on quality vs. quantity. For instance, a quieter student who raises her hand only twice during a discussion but provides thoughtful comments might be more noticeable to an instructor than a student who chimes in with everything that's said.
- **Be prepared**: As with listening, effective participation relies on coming to class prepared. Students should complete all reading assignments beforehand and also review any notes from the previous meeting. This way they can come to class ready to discuss and engage. Be sure to write down any questions or comments you have—this is an especially good strategy for quieter students or those who need practice thinking on their feet.

Figure 1.2.1: Image from Pixabay

Guidelines for Participating in Classes

Smaller classes generally favor discussion, but often instructors in large lecture classes also make some room for participation.

A concern or fear about speaking in public is one of the most common fears. If you feel afraid to speak out in class, take comfort from the fact that many others do as well—and that anyone can learn how to speak in class without much difficulty. Class participation is actually an impromptu, informal type of public speaking, and the same principles will get you through both: preparing and communicating.

- Set yourself up for success by coming to class fully prepared.
  - Complete reading assignments.
  - Review your notes on the reading and the previous class to get yourself in the right mindset.
  - If there is something you don't understand well, start formulating your question now.
- Sit in the front with a good view of the instructor, board, or screen, as well as other visual aids. In a lecture hall, this will help you hear better, pay better attention, and make a good impression on the instructor. Don't sit with friends—socializing isn't what you're there for.
- Remember that your body language communicates as much as anything you say. Sit up and look alert with a pleasant expression on your face, and make good eye contact with the instructor. Show some enthusiasm.
- Pay attention to the instructor's body language, which can communicate much more than just their words. How instructors

move and gesture, and the looks on their faces, will add meaning to the words—and will also cue you when it's a good time to ask a question or stay silent.
- Take good notes, but don't write obsessively—and never page through your textbook (or browse on a laptop).
- Don't eat or play with your cell phone.
- Except when writing brief notes, keep your eyes on the instructor.
- Follow class protocol for making comments and asking questions.
    - In a small class, the instructor may encourage students to ask questions at any time, while in some large lecture classes the instructor may ask for questions at the end of the lecture. In this case, jot your questions in your notes so that you don't forget them later.
- Don't say or ask anything just to try to impress your instructor. Most instructors have been teaching long enough to immediately recognize insincere flattery—and the impression this makes is just the opposite of what you want.
- Pay attention to the instructor's thinking style. Does this instructor emphasize theory more than facts, wide perspectives over specific ideas, abstractions more than concrete experience? Take a cue from your instructor's approach and try to think in similar terms when participating in class.
- It's fine to disagree with your instructor when you ask or answer a question. Many instructors invite challenges. Before speaking up, however, be sure you can explain why you disagree and give supporting evidence or reasons. Be respectful.
- Pay attention to your communication style. Use standard English when you ask or answer a question, not slang. Avoid sarcasm and joking around. Be assertive when you participate in class, showing confidence in your ideas while being respectful of the ideas of others. But avoid an aggressive style that attacks the ideas of others or is strongly emotional.

When your instructor asks a question to the class:

- Raise your hand and make eye contact, but don't call out or wave your hand all around trying to catch the instructor's
- attention.
- Before speaking, take a moment to gather your thoughts and take a deep breath. Don't just blurt it out—speak calmly and clearly.

When your instructor asks you a question directly:

- Be honest and admit it if you don't know the answer or are not sure. Don't try to fake it or make excuses. With a question that involves a reasoned opinion more than a fact, it's fine to explain why you haven't decided yet, such as when weighing two opposing ideas or actions; your comment may stimulate further discussion.
- Organize your thoughts to give a sufficient answer. Instructors seldom want a yes or no answer. Give your answer and provide reasons or evidence in support.

When you want to ask the instructor a question:

- Don't ever feel a question is "stupid." If you have been paying attention in class and have done the reading and you still don't understand something, you have every right to ask.
- Ask at the appropriate time. Don't interrupt the instructor or jump ahead and ask a question about something the instructor may be starting to explain. Wait for a natural pause and a good moment to ask. On the other hand, unless the instructor asks students to hold all question until the end of class, don't let too much time go by, or you may forget the question or its relevance to the topic.
- Don't ask just because you weren't paying attention. If you drift off during the first half of class and then realize in the second half that you don't really understand what the instructor is talking about now, don't ask a question about something that was already covered.
- Don't ask a question that is really a complaint. You may be thinking, "Why would so-and-so believe that? That's just crazy!" Take a moment to think about what you might gain from asking the question. It's better to say, "I'm having some difficulty understanding what so-and-so is saying here. What evidence did he use to argue for that position?"
- Avoid dominating a discussion. It may be appropriate in some cases to make a follow-up comment after the instructor answers your question, but don't try to turn the class into a one-on-one conversation between you and the instructor.

If You Must Miss a Class...

- **Plan in advance**: Although nobody can plan to be sick, students should give their instructors advanced notice if they know they will need to miss class for something like a doctor's appointment. This is not only respectful to the instructor, but he or

she may be able to give you any handouts or assignments that you might otherwise miss. If you anticipate that class will be canceled on account of bad weather, etc., make sure you have all the materials, notes, etc. that you need to work at home. In college, “snow days” are rarely “free days”—i.e., expect that you will be responsible for all the work due on those days when school reopens.

- **Talk to fellow students**: Ask to borrow class notes from one or two classmates who are reliable note takers. Be sure to also ask them about any announcements or assignments the instructor made during the class you missed.
- **Talk to your instructor:** Even if you have already emailed or called your instructor, check in with him or her before or after the next class period to collect any missed handouts and ask if anything was assigned. Most college classes use a learning management system (such as Canvas in California community colleges). Check your class on the learning management system to see if any handouts or notes are posted there. While you can’t expect the instructor to repeat the lecture, you can ask what you should do to stay caught up. But remember the worst thing you can say to an instructor: “I missed class—did you talk about anything important?”
- **Do the reading assignment(s) and any other homework.** Take notes on any readings to be discussed in the class you missed. If you have questions on the reading or homework, seek help from your classmates. Completing the homework and coming prepared for the next session will demonstrate to your instructor that you are still dedicated to the class.

Active Learning

Figure 1.2.1: Image from Pixabay

Megan is currently taking two classes: geology and American literature. In her geology class, the instructor lectures for the full class time and gives reading assignments. In Megan’s literature class, however, the instructor relies on class discussions, small group discussions, and occasionally even review games. Megan enjoys her literature class, but she struggles to feel engaged and interested in geology. What strategies can Megan use to stay motivated and involved in both of her courses?

Think about the college classes you’ve taken so far. Like Megan, you may feel like it’s a mixed bag: you probably enjoyed the courses with a variety of teaching styles and learning activities the most. Even if you’re a quieter, more reserved student who dislikes lots of group discussions, you probably prefer to have *some* class projects or writing assignments rather than lectures alone. Group projects, discussions, and writing are examples of active learning because they involve *doing* something. Active learning happens when students participate in their education through activities that enhance learning. Those activities may involve just thinking about what you’re learning. Active learning can take place both in and out of the classroom. The following are examples of activities that can facilitate active engagement in the classroom.

- **Class discussions**: Class discussions can help students stay focused because they feature different voices besides that of the instructor. Students can also hear one another’s questions and comments and learn from one another. Such discussions may involve the entire class, or the instructor may organize smaller groups, giving quieter students a greater chance to talk. Another method is to create online discussion boards so that students have more time to develop their ideas and comments and keep the conversation going.
- **Writing assignments**: Instructors may ask students to write short reaction papers or journal entries about lessons or reading

assignments. Such assignments can help you review or reflect on what you just learned to aid you in understanding and remembering the material. It also provides a means of communicating questions and concerns to your instructors.

- **Student-led teaching**: Many instructors believe that a true test of whether students understand concepts is being able to teach the material to others. For that reason, instructors will sometimes have students work in groups and research a topic or review assigned readings, and then prepare a mini presentation and teach it to the rest of the class. This activity can help students feel more accountable for their learning and work harder since classmates will be relying on them.

Figure 1.2.1: Image from Pixabay

Group discussions are examples of active learning that encourage students to participate in their education.

Success in Being a Responsible College Student

Being a responsible college student is another mark of success. College life differs in many ways from high school and knowing what is expected from you is important to succeed in college. Some key differences to keep in mind:

- There are more rules in high school than in college so you have to make decisions responsibly.
- In college, it's up to you to make sure you understand the material being covered in class. It's your responsibility to keep up with the readings and assignments.
- In high school, your teachers made sure you understand facts and skills, and now that you're in college, it's up to you to apply what you have learned. Always consider how what you are learning can apply to your other classes or your future career.
- In college, the professors expect you to participate more actively in reviews for exams and quizzes. Come to class with questions.

The following video clip is a brief, informal student discussion about the challenges you may face as a student and provides examples of issues students face in transitioning from high school to college. The two main problems identified in the video are time management and working in groups. Multiple strategies and solutions are shared by the students. Click on the "cc" box underneath the video to activate the closed captioning.

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

Video 1.2.2: Problems Students Might Face in College

Exercise 3

- What are some recommendations that you've heard from your high school teachers that helped you prepare for college? Make a short list of the advice you got from your previous teachers.

Overall in college, you demonstrate that you are a responsible student when you do the following:

- Uphold the values of honesty and academic integrity.
- Arrive on time and prepared for all classes, meetings, academic activities, and special events.
- Give attention to quality and excellence in completing assignments.
- Allot sufficient time to fulfill responsibilities outside of class.
- Observe etiquette in all communications, giving respect to instructors, fellow students, staff and the larger college community.
- Take full advantage of college resources available to you.
- Respect diversity in people, ideas, and opinions.
- Achieve educational goals in an organized, committed, and proactive manner.
- Take full responsibility for personal behavior.
- Comply with all college policies.

By allowing these overarching principles to be your guide, you are embracing responsibility and making choices that lead to college success.

Major College Resources and How To Use Them

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 find several to be vital. So, be familiar with your options, and know where to find the services. Store contact information and visit any center for help.

Advising

Figure 1.2.1: Image from Pixabay

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. Meet your adviser or visit the advising office if you have an issue

regarding academics or need any 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

If you need any health services whatsoever, the campus health center should be your first destination. Step 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 campuses 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 could bring greater balance to your student life.

And Others

Additional support centers that students may wish to visit include offices for financial aid, students with disabilities or learning differences, housing, diversity, student organizations, athletics, continuing education, international students, child care, and many others. Refer to your college website or the college directory for information about the many, many services that can be part of your college experience.

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Answers

Exercise 1.2.1

Think about the differences in the attitudes of these three students and how they approach their classes. One's attitude toward learning, toward going to class, and toward the whole college experience is a huge factor in how successful a student will be. Make it your goal to attend every class; don't even think about not going. Going to class is the first step in engaging in your education by interacting with the instructor and other students. Here are some reasons why it's important to attend every class:

Miss a class and you'll miss *something*, even if you never know it. Even if a friend gives you notes for the class, they cannot contain *everything* said or shown by the instructor or written on the board for emphasis or questioned or commented on by other students. What you miss might affect your grade or your enthusiasm for the course. Why go to college at all if you're not going to *go* to college? While some students may say that you don't have to go to every class to do well on a test, that is very often a myth. Do you want to take that risk? Your final grade often reflects how you think about course concepts, and you will think more often and more clearly when engaged in class discussions and hearing the comments of other students. You can't get this by borrowing class notes from a friend. Research shows there is a correlation between absences from class and lower grades. It may be that missing classes causes lower grades or that students with lower grades miss more classes. Either way, missing classes and lower grades can be intertwined in a downward spiral of achievement. Your instructor will note your absences, even in a large class. In addition to making a poor impression, you reduce your opportunities for future interactions. You might not ask a question the next class because of the potential embarrassment of the instructor saying that was covered in the last class, which you apparently missed. Nothing is more insulting to an instructor than when you skip a class and then show up to ask, "Did I miss anything important?" You might be tempted to skip a class because the instructor is "boring," but it's more likely that you found the class boring because you weren't very attentive or didn't appreciate how the instructor was teaching. You paid a lot of money for your tuition. Get your money's worth!

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1.3: Understanding Yourself as a Learner

Understanding Yourself as a Learner

To succeed in college—or any situation where you must master new concepts and skills—it helps to know what makes you tick. For decades, educational researchers and organizational psychologists have examined how people take in and assimilate new information, how some people learn differently than others, and what conditions make students and workers most productive. Here are some questions that will help you understand yourself as a learner:

- **What is your learning style?** For the purposes of this chapter, learning style refers to the way you prefer to take in new information: by seeing, by listening, or through some other channel. (For more information, see the section on learning styles).
- **What times of day are you most productive?** If your energy peaks early, you might benefit from blocking out early morning time for studying or writing. If you are a night owl, set aside a few evenings a week for schoolwork.
- **How much clutter can you handle in your work space?** Some people work fine at a messy desk and know exactly where to find what they need in their stack of papers; however, most people benefit from maintaining a neat, organized space.
- **How well do you juggle potential distractions in your environment?** If you can study at home without being tempted to turn on the television, check your social media, fix yourself a snack, and so on, you could make home your work space. However, if you need a less distracting environment to stay focused, you may be able to find a nook on your college campus or in your community.
- **Does a little background noise help or hinder your productivity?** Some people work better when listening to background music or the low hum of conversation in a coffee shop. Others need total silence.
- **When you work with a partner or group, do you stay on task?** A study partner or group can sometimes be invaluable. However, working this way takes extra planning and effort, so be sure to use the time productively. If you find that group study sessions turn into social occasions, you may study better on your own.
- **How do you manage stress?** Accept that at certain points in the semester, you will feel stressed out. In your day-to-day routine, make time for activities that help you reduce stress, such as exercising, playing a musical instrument, playing a sport, hanging out with friends, or just scheduling downtime to relax.

Learning Styles

Most people have one channel that works best for them when it comes to taking in new information. Knowing yours can help you develop strategies for studying, time management, and note-taking that work especially well for you.

To begin identifying your learning style, think about how you would go about the process of assembling a piece of furniture. Which of these options sounds most like you?

1. You would carefully look over the diagrams in the assembly manual first so you could picture each step in the process.
2. You would silently read the directions through, step by step, and then look at the diagrams afterward.
3. You would read the directions aloud and/or have someone explain the steps to you.
4. You would start putting the pieces together and figure out the process through trial and error, consulting the directions as you worked.

Now read the following explanations. Again, think about whether each description sounds like you.

- If you chose (a), you may be a visual learner. You understand ideas best when they are presented in a visual format, such as a flowchart, a diagram, or text with clear headings and many photos or illustrations.
- If you chose (b), you may be a verbal learner. You understand ideas best through reading and writing about them and taking detailed notes.
- If you chose (c), you may be an auditory learner. You understand ideas best through listening. You learn well from spoken lectures or books on tape.
- If you chose (d), you may be a kinesthetic learner. You learn best through doing, and prefer hands-on activities. In long lectures, fidgeting may help you focus.

Note

> If you want to get more in-depth into figuring out your dominant learning style, try this questionnaire.

Your learning style does not completely define you as a student. Auditory learners can comprehend a flow chart, and kinesthetic learners can sit still long enough to read a book. However, if you do have one dominant learning style, you can work with it to get the most out of your classes and study time. Table 1.3 “Learning Style Strategies” lists some tips for maximizing your learning style.

Table 1.3 - Learning Style Strategies

Learning Style	Strategies
Visual	• When possible, represent concepts visually—in charts, diagrams, or sketches. • Use a visual format for taking notes on reading assignments or lectures. • Use different-colored highlighters or pens to color-code information as you read. • Use visual organizers, such as maps, flowcharts, etc., to help you plan writing assignments. • Use colored pens, highlighters, or the review feature of your word-processing program to revise and edit writing.
Verbal	• Use the instructional features in course texts—summaries, chapter review questions, glossaries, and so on—to aid your studying. • Take notes on your reading assignments. • Rewrite or condense reading notes and lecture notes to study. • Summarize important ideas in your own words. • Use informal writing techniques, such as brainstorming, free writing, blogging, or posting on a class discussion forum to generate ideas for writing assignments. • Re-read and take notes on your writing to help you revise and edit.
Auditory	• Ask your instructor’s permission to tape-record lectures to supplement your notes. • Read parts of your textbook or notes aloud when you study. • If possible, obtain an audio book version of important course texts. Make use of supplemental audio materials, such as CDs or DVDs. • Talk through your ideas with other students when studying or when preparing for a writing assignment. • Read your writing aloud to help you draft, revise, and edit.
Kinesthetic	• When you read or study, use techniques that will keep your hands in motion, such as highlighting or taking notes. • Use tactile study aids, such as flash cards or study guides you design yourself. • Use self-stick notes to record ideas for writing. These notes can be physically reorganized easily to help you determine how to shape your paper. • Walk around while reading; walk and talk into a tape recorder when drafting. • Use a physical activity, such as running or swimming, to help you break through writing blocks. • Take breaks during studying to stand, stretch, or move around.

Defining Multimodal Learning

In the college setting, you’ll probably discover that instructors teach their course materials according to the method they think will be most effective for students overall. Thus, regardless of your individual learning preference, you will probably be asked to engage in all types of learning. For instance, even though you consider yourself to be a “visual learner,” you will still probably have to write papers in some of your classes. Research suggests that it’s good for the brain to learn in new ways and that learning in

different modalities can help learners become more well-rounded. Consider the following statistics on how much content students absorb through different learning methods:

- 10 percent of content they *read*
- 20 percent of content they *hear*
- 30 percent of content they *visualize*
- 50 percent of what they both *visualize and hear*
- 70 percent of what they *say*
- 90 percent of what they *say and do*

The range of these results underscores the importance of mixing up the ways in which you study and engage with learning materials.

You might also discover that you prefer more than one learning style. Applying more than one learning style is known as multimodal learning. This strategy is useful not only for students who prefer to combine learning styles, but also for those who may not know which learning style works best for them. It's also a good way to mix things up and keep learning fun.

For example, consider how you might combine visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles for a biology class. For visual learning, you could create flash cards containing images of individual animals and the species name. For auditory learning, you could have a friend quiz you on the flash cards. For kinesthetic learning, you could move the flash cards around on a board to show a food web (food chain).

> **Tip:**
>
> The material presented here about learning styles is just the tip of the iceberg. There are numerous other variations in how people learn. Some people like to act on information right away while others reflect on it first. Some people excel at mastering details and understanding concrete, tried and true ideas while others enjoy exploring abstract theories and innovative, even impractical ideas. For more information about how you learn, visit your school's academic resource center.

The following video will help you review the types of learning styles and see how they might relate to your study habits:

YouTube Video

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Video 1.3.1

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1.4: Time Management

Case Study

Kai feels like he is struggling through his first semester of college. He works long hours at a job every night, lives at home, and helps care for his younger sister. When he gets home from work, he is ready for bed and is often too tired for homework or studying. He has trouble focusing in class and occasionally drifts off during lectures. Kai knows he needs to change some of his habits, but he feels too overwhelmed to know where to start.

Lots of students like Kai have to balance a lot of responsibilities, such as work, school, and family. Such competing demands can make it hard to get the most out of class time and assignments. The effort you put in to succeed in college will pay off, though, and there are ways that you can physically and mentally prepare to excel in class. Work-life balance is key and time-management allows you to succeed with maintaining this balance.

For work-life balance, we need to

- Eat healthy meals and snacks
- Exercise regularly
- Get enough sleep
- Manage stress
- Talk to guidance counselors and instructors
- Have good time-management practices
- Know when we are trying to do too much and make decisions about our time.

Time management allows us to achieve our goals and at the same time remain healthy. In college you have increased freedom to structure your time as you please. With that freedom comes increased responsibility. High school teachers often take it upon themselves to track down students who miss class or forget assignments. College instructors, however, expect you to take full responsibility for managing yourself and getting your work done on time. There are three important steps in learning to effectively manage your time:

1. Identify your time management style
2. Create a schedule
3. Get better at prioritizing

After Kai decides to talk to his guidance counselor about his stress and difficulty balancing his activities, his guidance counselor recommends that Kai identify his time-management style and create a schedule. This will help him set time for homework, studying, work, and leisure activities so that he avoids procrastinating about his schoolwork. His counselor explains that if Kai sets aside a specific time to study every day—rather than simply studying when he feels like he has the time—his study habits will become more regular, which will improve Kai's learning.

At the end of their session, Kai and the counselor have put together a rough schedule for Kai to further refine as he goes through the next couple of weeks. What follows is a list of what they did and came up with.

Identify Your Time Management Style

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Exercise 1

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. Depends on how much work you have for your other classes. But you might forget about it until a few hours before the assignment is due, and ask for an extension.	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

	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
		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
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

	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
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're naturally gifted with keeping things balanced. 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.

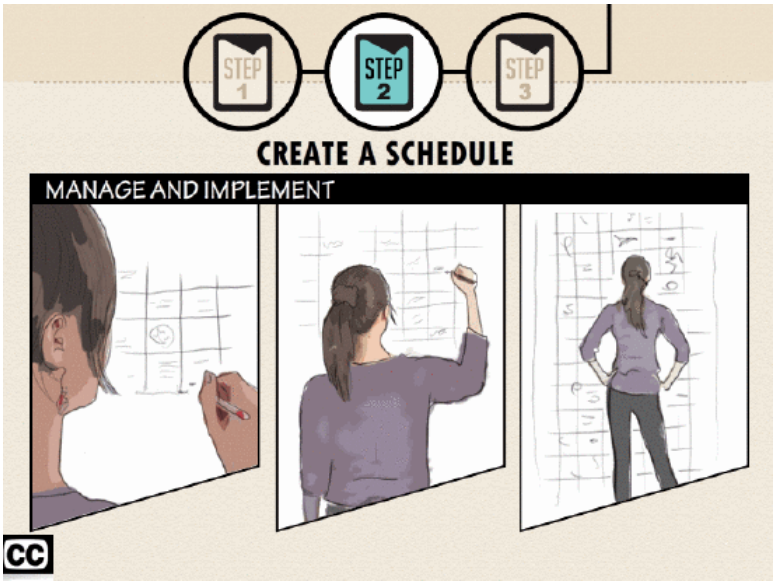
The Pressure Cooker

- **Traits**: You always get things done and almost always at the last minute.
- **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 are 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.
- **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



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Although Kai knows that studying is important and he is trying to keep up with homework, he really needs to work on time management. This is challenging for many college students, especially ones with lots of responsibilities outside of school. Unlike high school classes, college classes meet less often, and college students are expected to do more independent learning, homework, and studying. The amount of time students spend on coursework outside of the physical classroom will vary, depending on the course (how rigorous it is and how many credits it's worth) and on the institution's expectations. However, a general rule is that the ratio of classroom time to study time is 1:2 or 1:3. That means that for every hour you spend in class, you should plan to spend two to three hours out of class working independently on course assignments. For example, if your composition class meets for one hour, three times a week, you're expected to devote from six to nine hours each week on reading assignments, writing assignments, etc.

If you account for all the classes you're taking in a given semester, the study time really adds up—and if it sounds like a lot of

work, it is! The only way to stay on top of the workload is by creating a schedule to help you manage your time. You might decide to use a weekly or monthly schedule—or both. Whatever you choose, the following tips can help you design a smart schedule that's easy to follow and stick with.

TIP

The two- to three-hour rule may sound intimidating. However, keep in mind that this is only a rule of thumb. Realistically, some courses will be more challenging than others, and the demands will ebb and flow throughout the semester. You may have trouble-free weeks and stressful weeks. When you schedule your classes, try to balance introductory-level classes with more advanced classes so that your work load stays manageable.

Start with Fixed Time Commitments

First off, mark down the commitments that don't allow any flexibility. These include class meetings, work hours, appointments, etc. Capturing the "fixed" parts of your schedule can help you see where there are blocks of time that can be used for other activities.

Kai's Schedule

Kai is taking four classes: Spanish 101, US History, College Algebra, and Introduction to Psychology. He also has a fixed work schedule of 27 hours a week.

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Sunday</th><th>Monday</th><th>Tuesday</th><th>Wednesday</th><th>Thursday</th><th>Friday</th><th>Saturday</th></tr>
<tr><td>8:00 AM</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>9:00 AM</td><td></td><td>Spanish 101</td><td>Spanish 101</td><td>Spanish 101</td><td>Spanish 101</td><td>Spanish 101</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>10:00 AM</td><td></td><td>US History I</td><td></td><td>US History I</td><td></td><td>US History I</td><td rowspan="3">Work</td></tr>
<tr><td>11:00 AM</td><td></td><td>College Algebra</td><td rowspan="2">Intro to Psychology (ends at 12:30)</td><td>College Algebra</td><td rowspan="2">Intro to Psychology (ends at 12:30)</td><td>College Algebra</td></tr>
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<tr><td>8:00 PM</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Consider Your Studying and Homework Habits

When are you most productive? Are you a morning person or a night owl? Block out your study times accordingly. You'll also want to factor in any resources you might need. For instance, if you prefer to study very early or late in the day, and you're working on a research paper, you might want to check the library hours to make sure it's open when you need it.

Kai's Schedule

Since Kai's Spanish class starts his schedule at 9:00 every day, he decides to use that as the base for his schedule. He doesn't usually have trouble waking up in the mornings (except for on the weekends), so he decides to do a bit of studying before class. His Spanish practice is often something he can do while eating or traveling, so this gives him a bit of leniency with his schedule.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7:00 AM							
8:00 AM		HW: Spanish 101	HW: Spanish 101	HW: Spanish 101	HW: Spanish 101	HW: Spanish 101	
9:00 AM		Spanish 101	Spanish 101	Spanish 101	Spanish 101	Spanish 101	
10:00 AM		US History I	HW: Spanish 101	US History I	HW: Spanish 101	US History I	Work
11:00 AM		College Algebra	Intro to Psychology (ends at 12:30)	College Algebra	Intro to Psychology (ends at 12:30)	College Algebra	
12:00 PM		HW: Spanish 101		HW: Spanish 101		HW: Spanish 101	
1:00 PM	HW: Spanish 101	Work (start 12:30 end 4:30)		Work (start 12:30 end 4:30)		Work (start 12:30 end 4:30)	HW: Spanish 101
2:00 PM	HW: US History I		Work		Work		HW: Intro to Psych
3:00 PM							
4:00 PM							
5:00 PM		HW: College Algebra		HW: College Algebra		HW: College Algebra	
6:00 PM							
7:00 PM							
8:00 PM		HW: Intro to Psych		HW: Intro to Psych			
9:00 PM			HW: US History I		HW: US History I		
10:00 PM							

Plan Ahead

Even if you prefer weekly over monthly schedules, write reminders for yourself and keep track of any upcoming projects, papers, or exams. You will also want to prepare for these assignments in advance. Most students eventually discover (the hard way) that cramming for exams the night before and waiting until the last minute to start on a term paper is a poor strategy. Procrastination creates a lot of unnecessary stress, and the resulting final product—whether an exam, lab report, or paper—is rarely your best work. Try simple things to break down large tasks, such as setting aside an hour or so each day to work on them during the weeks leading up to the deadline. If you get stuck, get help from your instructor early, rather than waiting until the day before an assignment is due.

Consider Leisure Time

TIP

When you look at Kai's schedule, you can see that he's left open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings. While he plans on using Sundays to complete larger assignments when he needs to, he's left Friday and Saturday evenings open for leisure.

It might seem impossible to leave room in your schedule for fun activities, but every student needs and deserves to socialize and relax on a regular basis. Try to make this time something you look forward to and count on, and use it as a reward for getting things done. You might reserve every Friday or Saturday evening for going out with friends, for example. Or, if a club you're interested in meets on Thursdays during a time you've reserved for studying, try to reschedule your study time so you can do both.

Exercise 2

Now that you have considered ways to create a schedule, you can practice making one that will help you succeed academically. **The California Community College's Online Education site** has a free source for populating a study schedule based on your individual course load. For this exercise, you will develop a weekly schedule and a semester calendar.

1. Working with your class schedule, map out a week-long schedule of study time. Try to apply the "two- to three-hour" rule. Be sure to include any other nonnegotiable responsibilities, such as a job or child care duties.
2. Use your course syllabi to record exam dates and due dates for major assignments in a calendar (paper or electronic). Use a star, highlighting, or other special marking to set off any days or weeks that look especially demanding.
3. If you have a tendency to forget, put your schedule into the appointment calendar on your phone if you have one. Then set alerts for each of those study "appointments."

YouTube Video

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View this YouTube Video online

Video 1.4.1

The video above talks about the importance of balancing school and work, and suggests 5 strategies to help you.

Get Better at Prioritizing

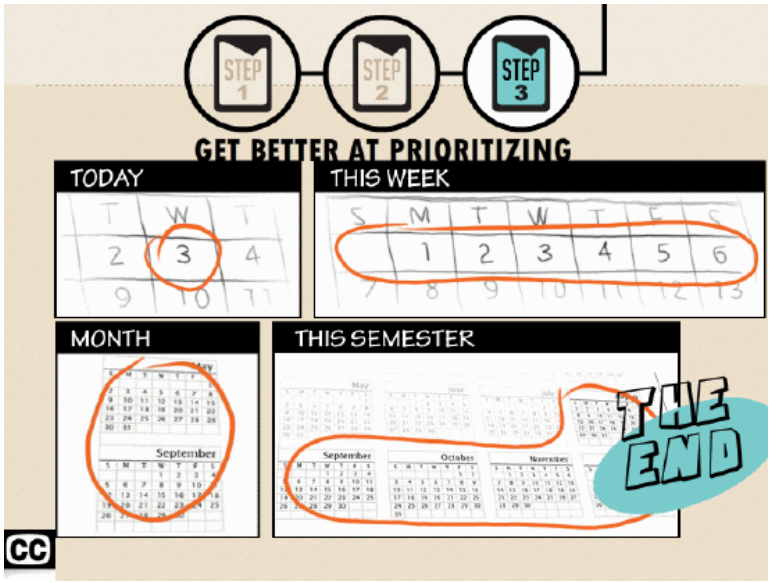

Figure: . Authored by: Unknown. License: CC

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 of the first month of the semester?
- What needs to get done by the end of 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, 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.

In the following video, Joseph Clough shares key strategies for conquering procrastination once and for all.

YouTube Video

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Video 1.4.1

Staying Consistent: Time Management Dos and Don'ts

Setting up a schedule is easy. Sticking with it, however, may create challenges. A schedule that looked great on paper may prove to be unrealistic. Sometimes, despite students' best intentions, they end up procrastinating or pulling all-nighters to finish a paper or study for an exam.

Keep in mind, however, that your weekly schedule and semester calendar are time-management tools. Like any tools, their effectiveness depends on the user: you. If you leave a tool sitting in the box unused (e.g., if you set up your schedule and then forget about it), it will not help you complete the task. And if, for some reason, a particular tool or strategy is not getting the job done, you need to figure out why and maybe try using something else.

With that in mind, read the list of time-management dos and don'ts. Keep this list handy as a reference you can use throughout the semester to "troubleshoot" if you feel like your schoolwork is getting off track.

Dos

1. Set aside time to review your schedule or calendar regularly and update or adjust them as needed.
2. Be realistic when you schedule study time. Do not plan to write your paper on Friday night when everyone else is out socializing. When Friday comes, you might end up abandoning your plans and hanging out with your friends instead.
3. Be honest with yourself about where your time goes. Do not fritter away your study time on distractions like e-mail and social networking sites.
4. Accept that occasionally your work may get a little off track. No one is perfect.
5. Accept that sometimes you may not have time for all the fun things you would like to do.
6. Recognize times when you feel overextended. Sometimes you may just need to get through an especially demanding week. However, if you feel exhausted and overworked all the time, you may need to scale back on some of your commitments.
7. Have a plan for handling high-stress periods, such as final exam week. Try to reduce your other commitments during those periods—for instance, by scheduling time off from your job. Build in some time for relaxing activities, too.

Don'ts

1. Do not procrastinate on challenging assignments. Instead, break them into smaller, manageable tasks that can be accomplished one at a time.
2. Do not fall into the trap of "all-or-nothing" thinking: "There is no way I can fit in a three-hour study session today, so I will just wait until the weekend." Extended periods of free time are hard to come by, so find ways to use small blocks of time productively. For instance, if you have a free half hour between classes, use it to preview a chapter or brainstorm ideas for an essay.
3. Do not fall into the trap of letting things slide and promising yourself, "I will do better next week." When next week comes, the accumulated undone tasks will seem even more intimidating, and you will find it harder to get them done.
4. Do not rely on caffeine and sugar to compensate for lack of sleep. These stimulants may temporarily perk you up, but your brain functions best when you are rested.

TIP

The key to managing your time effectively is consistency. Completing the following tasks will help you stay on track throughout the semester.

1. Establish regular times to "check in" with yourself to identify and prioritize tasks and plan how to accomplish them. Many people find it is best to set aside a few minutes for this each day and to take some time to plan at the beginning of each week.
2. For the next two weeks, focus on consistently using whatever time-management system you have set up. Check in with yourself daily and weekly, stick to your schedule, and take note of anything that interferes. At the end of the two weeks, review your schedule and determine whether you need to adjust it.
3. Review the preceding list of dos and don'ts.
    1. Identify at least two habits from the "Dos" list that you could use to improve your time-management skills.

2. Identify the habit from the “Don’ts” list that you are most likely to slip into as the semester gets busier. What could you do to combat this habit?

Writing at Work

If you are part of the workforce, you have probably established strategies for accomplishing job-related tasks efficiently. How could you adapt these strategies to help you be a successful student? For instance, you might sync up your school and work schedules on an electronic calendar. Instead of checking in with your boss about upcoming work deadlines, establish a buddy system where you check in with a friend about school projects. Give school the same priority you give to work.

In the following Alleyoop Advice video, Alleyoop (Angel Aquino) discusses what many students discover about college: there is a lot of free time—and just as many challenges to balance free time with study time.

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Video 1.4.1

Additional Resources:

- 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.
- 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.
- Here is a **time management calculator** for first-year students at the University of Texas El Paso.

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1.5: Key Takeaways

- College success depends on consistently studying, attending class, listening actively, and participating, as well as connecting yourself to relevant resources on campus.
- Reading and writing help you become a better thinker, and these are some of the skills most in demand by employers.
- Knowing your learning style and working with that can help you study and learn more effectively.
- Managing your time well is a major key for college success, as is avoiding procrastination.

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2: WRITING AND THE ART OF RHETORIC

2.1: Writing as Conversation
2.2: What is Academic Writing?
2.3: Critical Thinking
2.4: The Art of Rhetoric
2.5: Logical Fallacies - How to Spot Them and Avoid Making Them
2.6: Rhetorical Analysis
2.7: Key Takeaways

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2.1: Writing as Conversation

Writing as Conversation

Writing does not happen in a vacuum but within a specific context and time. The process of writing can be better understood if it is viewed as a conversation between writer and reader within a specific context and time, rather than a static text. As a college student, you are expected to engage with, and join, the conversations about myriad topics --not only with classmates, but also writers who are experts in their fields. Imagine you are entering a room buzzing with different conversations...you choose to enter one of the conversations. Most of you have learned the required etiquette needed to not only join the conversation politely, but also to add something of value. Joining the world of written conversations is not much different and has its own set of etiquette and rules.

In this course, you will learn all about engaging with written texts. As someone who has graduated from high school, you have already learned how to write cohesive paragraphs and short essays. This course will teach you to engage critically with texts written by experts, by adding your written opinions. You will need to hone your research skills to actively seek out the latest conversations in specific subjects, and fine-tune your methods of presentation to join in the discussion.

Figure: by Pixabay

Writing as a Conversation That Changes Over Time

Michael Charlton, Professor at Missouri Western State University, writes in his essay, "Understanding How Conversations Change Over Time" that we are surrounded by conversations with which we engage meaningfully. The following excerpt is adapted from his essay:

Writers make their claims in the real world where people with other opinions, values, beliefs, and experiences live. To make a claim is to enter into a conversation with these people. The rhetorician, Kenneth Burke, once famously described this as a parlor or party to which you have come late to find out that people are already in heated discussions about a topic. After you see who is part of the conversation and hear what they are saying, you begin to feel comfortable enough to offer your own take on the subject.

For example, you arrive somewhere to meet two friends and discover that they are discussing where to go to dinner or which movie to see. Each friend presents his or her argument, setting out evidence for why this restaurant or movie is a good choice, and each friend pokes holes in the other person's argument, pointing out why he or she would not enjoy that restaurant or movie. You are expected to take a role in this discussion. Maybe you take a stand with one friend over the other, or maybe you try to reach a compromise and propose a third restaurant or movie that everyone could accept. This can lead to even further discussion.

This discussion between three friends is somewhat like Burke's idea of the parlor, but there are differences. Eventually the conversation between the three friends will reach an end: they will go to dinner or a movie, perhaps, or they will all go home. Everyone entered into the conversation, made his or her claims, responded to other people, and went on with their lives. Burke, however, was talking about the conversations and arguments that take place in the larger culture and the world as a whole. In his

metaphor, the conversation never truly ends. A writer enters into it at a particular place and time and tries to react to everything that has come before. He or she may even be influential in changing the direction or tone of the conversation by looking at it from a new angle or focusing on a different aspect of it; for example, maybe the three friends need to consider whether there is a certain type of food or movie one of them dislikes or maybe the three friends need to consider a different activity.

For most complex social issues, the conversation never truly ends.

It may, however, change over time.

For most complex social issues, the conversation never truly ends. It may, however, change over time. This can happen for many reasons. Social values may change in the larger culture, such as the growing focus on children's welfare that led to an increase in child labor laws and child protective services in the early twentieth century. It may be the impact of large historical events, such as the impact the 9/11 attacks had on public perceptions of airport safety and screening procedures. Or maybe new scientific or other sorts of data raise concerns, such as the shifting dialog over climate change and global warming. It may even be that new groups of people enter the conversation, such as the increased prominence in recent years, of advocates for equality regardless of sexual orientation.

One widely discussed social trend that continues to inform American and global discourse is the increasing prominence of women in the workplace during and after the Second World War. At that time, this was a controversial development for many people, who felt that women were leaving traditional gender roles and the home in order to pursue work conventionally identified with men. (Although, as some historians have noted, women have always played an important role in businesses from agriculture to manufacturing, and so this conversation is far older than the mid-twentieth century.)

Most viewers watching an educational film made in 1959 entitled *The Trouble with Women* (see video links at the bottom of the page) find its depiction of female workers to be so incredibly dated that it is almost comical. Changes in social values have rendered the film's discussion between two men about female employees ridiculous. Both the "con" side (with his insistence that female workers are inherently inferior) and the "pro" side (with his argument that what he calls "gals" or "girls" can be just as good) have no mainstream place in contemporary discussions of gender in the workplace. The entire question up for discussion (can women fit into the workplace?) is one that has been answered by fifty years of history in which women have fully integrated into the American workplace, and social values around gender issues and equality have changed.

However, this does not mean that the conversation has ended. Rather, the conversation about whether women should be allowed in the workplace has morphed into a discussion of how all genders are treated in the workplace. Contemporary discussions are more likely to focus on income disparity; the balance between family life, childcare, and the workplace; why certain professions are still dominated by one gender; sexual harassment; etc. Among other factors, the increased prominence of women and the rise in social movements, such as second wave feminism, gave women a greater voice in the public sphere and a greater ability to steer the conversation.

Conversations do not change overnight. A speech made by Ford about women's rights and women in the workplace in 1975, would be very different from a speech made by Google to promote the role women play in leadership positions in the company. What changes in the conversation do you think might have taken place between the educational film and speech in 1975? What changes in the conversation take place between Ford's speech and what is essentially a public relations commercial for Google? What might it say about the current conversation around women in the workplace that Google felt it necessary to create this video? How has the presentation of female professionals changed from 1959 to this 2011 spot? Why might Google be less interested in contemporary issues like income disparity?

Writing to Become Part of a Community and Conversation

The video below discusses every day and academic writing in the context of establishing networks, or conversations with other people carrying on a conversation. It also discusses how academic writing is different from other types of writing. Ultimately, all writing seeks to establish and maintain networks, though these will differ in your personal/social and academic worlds.

YouTube Video

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Video 2.1.1

Additional Materials

- *Video: The Trouble with Women*
- Video: First Lady Betty Ford delivers revolutionary speech on the need for equal rights of women in 1975
- Video: Women in leadership at Google

Contributors and Attributions

- Essays as Conversation. Revision and adaptation of the page Writing Commons: Michael Charlton's Understanding How Conversations Change Over Time . **Authored by**: Susan Oaks. **Provided by**: Empire State College, SUNY OER Services. **Project**: College Writing. **License**: ***CC BY-NC: Attribution-NonCommercial***

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2.2: What is Academic Writing?

Speaking versus Writing

Now that we've established that writing adds your own view to a conversation that is already in place, we need to distinguish between speaking and writing, for while both mediums add to conversations, writing -- and especially academic writing -- does so with very different means. L. Lennie Irwin, in "What is academic writing?" talks about how the biggest problem first-year writers face is not understanding the differences between spoken and written conversation. The following excerpt talks about these differences and the challenges a writer faces as opposed to a speaker:

> The biggest problem I see in first-year writers is a poor sense of the writing situation in general. To illustrate this problem, let's look at the difference between speaking and writing. When we speak, we inhabit the communication situation bodily in three dimensions, but in writing we are confined within the two-dimensional setting of the flat page (though writing for the web—or multimodal writing—is changing all that).

- Writing resembles having a blindfold over our eyes and our hands tied behind our backs: we can't see exactly whom we're talking to or where we are.
- Separated from our audience in place and time, we imaginatively have to create this context.
- Our words on the page are silent, so we must use punctuation and word choice to communicate our tone.

We can't see our audience to gauge how our communication is being received or if there will be some kind of response. It's the same space we share right now as you read this essay. Novice writers often write as if they were mumbling to themselves in the corner with no sense that their writing will be read by a reader or any sense of the context within which their communication will be received. What's the moral here?

TIP

Developing your "writer's sense" about communicating within the writing situation is the most important thing you should learn in freshman composition. What is this "writing situation?" This situation is explained further in detail elsewhere and consists of:

- knowing your audience
- knowing the occasion or context
- conveying the message clearly
- understanding the formats and genres

Developing your "writer's sense" about communicating within the writing situation is the most important thing you should learn in freshman composition. Figure 1, below, depicting the writing situation, presents a wonderful image describing all the complexities involved in the writing situation.

Looking More Closely at the "Academic Writing" Situation

Writing in college is a fairly specialized writing situation, and it has developed its own codes and conventions that you need to have a keen awareness of if you are going to write successfully in college. Let's break down the writing situation in college: Who's your audience? Primarily the professor and possibly your classmates (though you may be asked to include a secondary outside audience). What's the occasion or context? An assignment given by the teacher within a learning context and designed to have you learn and demonstrate your learning. What's your message? It will be your learning or the interpretation gained from your study of the subject matter. What's your purpose? To show your learning and get a good grade (or to accomplish the goals of the writing assignment). What documents/ genres are used? The essay is the most frequent type of document used. So far, this list looks like nothing new. You've been writing in school toward teachers for years. What's different in college?

Common Academic Writing Myths

Students are often stymied by myths they have adopted throughout their schooling about writing, especially academic writing. All the myths listed below result in problematic writing.

Myth #1:

The “Paint by Numbers” myth. Some writers believe they must perform certain steps in a particular order to write “correctly.” **Truth:** Rather than being a lock-step linear process, writing is “recursive.” That means we cycle through and repeat the various activities of the writing process many times as we write.

Myth #2:

Writers only start writing when they have everything figured out. **Truth:** Writing is not like putting away ironed and folded clothing. Writers figure out much of what they want to write as they write it. Rather than waiting, get some writing on the page—even with gaps or problems. You can come back to patch up rough spots.

Myth #3:

Perfect the first draft. **Truth:** We put unrealistic expectations on early drafts, either by focusing too much on the impossible task of making them perfect (which can limit the development of our ideas), or by making too little effort because we don’t care or know about their inevitable problems. Nobody writes perfect first drafts; polished writing takes lots of revision.

Myth #4:

Some have got it; I don’t—the genius fallacy. **Truth:** When you see your writing ability as something fixed or out of your control (as if it were in your genetic code), then you won’t believe you can improve as a writer and are likely not to make any efforts in that direction. With effort and study, you can improve as a writer. I promise.

Myth #5:

Good grammar is good writing. **Truth:** When people say “I can’t write,” what they often mean is that they have problems with grammatical correctness. Writing, however, is about more than just grammatical correctness. Good writing is a matter of achieving a desired effect upon an intended audience. Plus, as we saw in myth #3, no one writes perfect first drafts. Finally, there is no point in having great grammar if you aren't saying anything worth saying with your writing.

Myth #6:

The Five Paragraph Essay. Some say, avoid it at all costs; while others believe no other way to write exists. **Truth:** With an introduction, three supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion, the five paragraph essay is a format you should know, but one which you will outgrow. You’ll have to gauge every writing assignment to see whether, and how, this format is useful for you.

Myth #7:

Never use “I”. **Truth:** Adopting this formal stance of objectivity implies a distrust (almost fear) of informality and often leads to artificial, puffed-up prose. Although some writing situations will call on you to avoid using “I” (for example, a lab report), much college writing can be done in a middle, semi-formal style where it is ok to use “I.”

College Writing Assignments: What's Expected

We've seen how college assignments have different expectations than high school assignments, but what about writing assignments specifically? How is college academic writing different from grade school essays? Lee Ann Carroll, a professor at Pepperdine University, performed a study of student writing in college and had this description of the kind of writing you will be

doing in college: *What are usually called 'writing assignments' in college might more accurately be called 'literacy tasks' because they require much more than the ability to construct correct sentences or compose neatly organized paragraphs with topic sentences. . . . Projects calling for high levels of critical literacy in college typically require knowledge of research skills, ability to read complex texts, understanding of key disciplinary concepts, and strategies for synthesizing, analyzing, and responding critically to new information, usually within a limited time frame.*

Academic writing is always a form of evaluation that asks you to demonstrate knowledge and show proficiency with certain disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting, and presenting. Writing the paper is never "just" the writing part. To be successful in this kind of writing, you must be completely aware of what the professor expects you to do and accomplish with that particular writing task. For a moment, let's explore more deeply the elements of the college writing "literacy task."

Knowledge of Research Skills

In school, research has perhaps meant checking on Google and Wikipedia. College, however, will require you to search for and find more in-depth information. You'll need to know how to find information in the library, especially what is available from online databases that contain scholarly articles. Researching is also a process, so you'll need to learn how to focus and direct a research project and how to keep track of all your source information. Realize that researching represents a crucial component of most college writing assignments, and you will need to devote lots of time to researching.

The Ability to Read Complex Texts

Whereas your previous writing in school might have been based on your experiences, college writing typically asks you to write on unfamiliar topics. Whether you're reading your textbook, a short story, or scholarly articles from research, your ability to write well will be based upon the quality of your reading. In addition to reading attentively, you'll need to think critically as you read: separating fact from opinion, recognizing biases and assumptions, and making inferences. Inferences are how we, as readers, connect the dots: an inference is a belief (or statement) about something unknown made on the basis of something known. You smell smoke; you infer fire. Inferences are conclusions or interpretations that we arrive at, based upon the known factors we discover from our reading. When you, then, write to argue for these interpretations, your job is to get readers to make the same inferences you have made.

The Understanding of Key Disciplinary Concepts

Each discipline whether it is English, Psychology, or History has its own key concepts (ideas), and language, for describing their specific ways of understanding the world. What Is "Academic" Writing? Don't kid yourself that your professors' writing assignments are asking for your opinion on the topic from just your experience. They want to see you apply and use in your writing the concepts you've read about. This is called text-based writing. Though different from a multiple-choice exam, academic writing also requires you to demonstrate your learning. So whatever writing assignment you receive, inspect it closely for what concepts it asks you to bring into your writing.

Strategies for Synthesizing, Analyzing, and Responding Critically to New Information

To organize your research, you need to develop the skill of a seasoned traveler who can be dropped in any city in the world and is able to navigate his way. Each writing assignment asks you to navigate through a new terrain of information, so you must develop ways to grasp new subject matter in order, and then to use it in your writing. We have already seen the importance of reading and researching for these literacy tasks, but after finding the information, you will need to learn ways of sorting and finding meaningful patterns in this information.

College Assignments & the Cognitive Domain of Learning

The cognitive domain of learning is divided into six main learning-skill levels, or learning-skill stages, which are arranged hierarchically—moving from the simplest of functions like remembering and understanding, to more complex learning skills, like applying and analyzing, to the most complex skills—evaluating and creating. The lower levels are more straightforward and fundamental, and the higher levels are more sophisticated. College assignments require you to work at the higher levels. See Figure 1, below.

Figure 1: The New Version of Bloom's Taxonomy

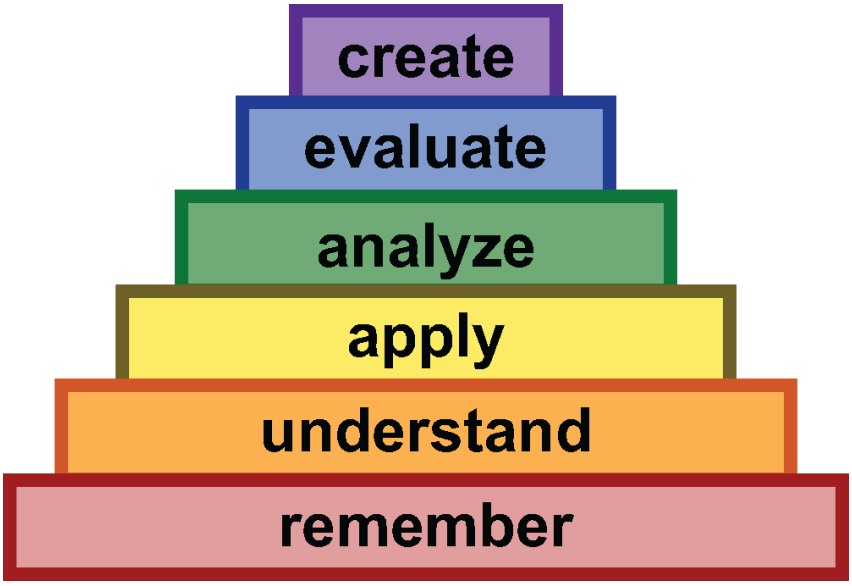

Figure: ." Writing@CSU. 2010. Web. 10 March 2010. Used by permission from Mike Palmquist.

The following table describes the six main skill sets within the cognitive domain.

Table 2.2: Main Skill Sets within the Cognitive Domain

MAIN SKILL LEVELS WITHIN THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF RELATED LEARNING SKILLS (specific actions related to the skill set)
Remembering	When you are skilled in remembering, you can recognize or recall knowledge you've already gained, and you can use it to produce or retrieve or recite definitions, facts, and lists. *Remembering may be how you studied in grade school or high school, but college will require you to do more with the information.*	identify · relate · list · define · recall · memorize · repeat · record · name
Understanding	Understanding is the ability to grasp or construct meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages. *Each college course will introduce you to new concepts, terms, processes, and functions. Once you gain a firm understanding of new information, you'll find it easier, perhaps later, to comprehend how or why something works.*	restate · locate · report · recognize · explain · express · identify · discuss · describe · discuss · review · infer · illustrate · interpret · draw · represent · differentiate · conclude

MAIN SKILL LEVELS WITHIN THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF RELATED LEARNING SKILLS (specific actions related to the skill set)
Applying	When you apply, you use learned material (or you implement the material) in new and concrete situations. *In college you will be tested or assessed on what you've learned in the previous levels. You will be asked to solve problems in new situations by applying understanding in new ways. You may need to relate abstract ideas to practical situations.*	apply · relate · develop · translate · use · operate · organize · employ · restructure · interpret · demonstrate · illustrate · practice · calculate · show · exhibit · dramatize
Analyzing	When you analyze, you have the ability to break down or distinguish the parts of material into its components, so that its organizational structure may be better understood. *At this level, you will have a clearer sense that you comprehend the content well. You will be able to answer questions such as what if, or why, or how something would work.*	analyze · compare · probe · inquire · examine · contrast · categorize · differentiate · contrast · investigate · detect · survey · classify · deduce · experiment · scrutinize · discover · inspect · dissect · discriminate · separate
Evaluating	With skills in evaluating, you are able to judge, check, and even critique the value of material for a given purpose. *At this level in college you will be able to think critically, Your understanding of a concept or discipline will be profound. You may need to present and defend opinions.*	judge · assess · compare · evaluate · conclude · measure · deduce · argue · decide · choose · rate · select · estimate · validate · consider · appraise · value · criticize · infer
Creating	With skills in creating, you are able to put parts together to form a coherent or unique new whole. You can reorganize elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing. *Creating requires originality and inventiveness. It brings together all levels of learning to theorize, design, and test new products, concepts or functions.*	compose · produce · design · assemble · create · prepare · predict · modify · plan · invent · formulate · collect · generalize · document combine · relate · propose · develop · arrange · construct · organize · originate · derive · write · propose

The following video from the Center for Learning Success at the Louisiana State University discusses Bloom's taxonomy learning levels with regard to student success in college.

YouTube Video

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Video 2.2.1

From Bloom's taxonomy of learning skills, you can see that thought and thinking can be understood as patterns—systems and schemes within the mind. There is order and structure in the way we think and in the way we process and internalize information.

As we look at patterns of thought, we can also think about the power of thought. As a result of many amazing and potent research and discoveries, the scientific community is learning a great deal about how plastic, malleable, and constantly changing the brain is. For example, the act of thinking—*just* thinking—can affect not only the way your brain works but also its physical shape and structure. The following video explores some of these discoveries, which relate to all the thinking and thoughts involved in college success.

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2.3: Critical Thinking

Writing and Critical Thinking

We have seen how writing in college requires you to use higher order thinking skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating. These higher level abilities require critical thinking, which is a core skill emphasized by college professors, not just for college academic life, but also for navigating the choices you make as a citizen and member of your family and different communities. This is because 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.

Figure 2.3.1: (CC BY; Moyan Brenn via Flickr)

> 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 that so? Are there multiple perspectives to consider about 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, as well as 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.

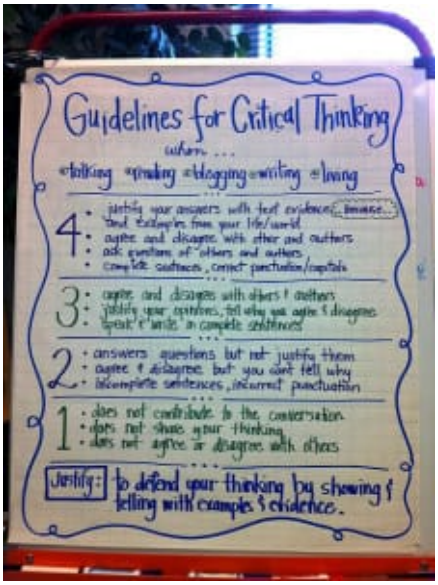

Figure 2.3.2:

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	Biased viewpoints

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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View this YouTube Video online

Video 2.3.1: Critical Thinking.wmv. Authored by: Lawrence Bland. *All Rights Reserved.* Standard YouTube license.

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, also presented in Figure 1, below, are ones you may apply to formulate 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: Critical Thinking Questions

Problem-Solving with Critical Thinking

Figure:

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:

- 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 because 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[21]
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

The following video demonstrates problem solving in our personal lives.

YouTube Video

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It's Not About the Nail by Jason Headley. *All Rights Reserved.* Standard YouTube license.

While this video is a lighthearted take on relationship problems, it is true that problem solving in any relationship can be difficult, whether that relationship is between two people in an intimate relationship, or between two roommates, or between two friends.

Example of Relationship Problem Solving using Critical Thinking

Anika's roommate, Eli, was upset and he said some unkind words to her, which put a crimp in the relationship. Anika wants to try to see through the angry behaviors to determine how she might best support Eli and help bring the relationship back to a comfortable spot. How should Anika proceed?

First, let's help Anika identify the problem. How would you describe the problem? Here are some options:

- Eli behaved inappropriately
- Anika is being too sensitive
- Anika and Eli are probably not a great fit as roommates

The best problem description is the first one – Eli behaved inappropriately. All of us at some point get upset and say things at times that hurt others. That doesn't mean it's acceptable, but it also doesn't mean that Anika and Eli are unable to solve the problem and continue their relationship.

Now that Anika has identified the problem – Eli behaved inappropriately – what are some possible solutions? Here are some options:

- Anika should ignore Eli – eventually he'll figure out that he did something wrong and apologize.
- Anika should ask Eli to sit down and discuss the problem right away.
- Anika should give Eli a little space and then talk to him.

Ignoring Eli is probably not a good solution. While it's perfectly natural for Anika to be angry about Eli's unkind words and want to ignore him, that doesn't address the problem. The other two options are better solutions.

Think through the pros and cons of each of the two possible solutions. Which one do you think is best?

It's a great idea for Anika to sit down and discuss the problem with Eli – this is a much healthier option than ignoring the problem. Whether or not she talks to Eli right away is likely a judgment call depending on the situation. If Eli is really upset, it might be better to wait a little while until he calms down and can have a more productive discussion.

Anika observed that Eli seemed pretty upset, and so decided to wait a few hours before talking with him. When she did talk to him later that afternoon, Anika told Eli that she valued his friendship, but that his unkind words were hurtful to her.

Eli explained that he has been getting continually more upset since he got a poor grade on his French mid-term. He needs to pass the class for his major, and has been stressed about the situation. He apologized for his earlier words, and Anika forgave him.

By using problem-solving skills, Anika was able to handle this situation in an effective way that resulted in a relatively quick resolution rather than letting it escalate into a more difficult situation that would be harder to resolve and would likely result in more pain on both sides of the relationship.

Exercise

Exercise 1

Use the "Problem Solving Action Checklist" to find a way solve the following problem.

Problem: You are overwhelmed with both work and school and don't know what to do. Your grades are slipping, and your manager has written you up for being late for work. How can you solve this problem and decrease your stress levels?

Define the problem:

Identify available solutions:

Select your solution:

Explain why you selected this solution:

Contributors

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2.4: The Art of Rhetoric

What is Rhetoric?

In its simplest form, **RHETORIC** is the art of persuasion. Every time we write, we engage in debate or argument. Through writing and speaking, we try to persuade and influence our readers, either directly or indirectly. We work to get them to change their minds, to do something, or to begin thinking in new ways. Put simply, to be effective, every writer needs to know, and be able to use, principles of rhetoric.

Writing is about making choices, and knowing the principles of rhetoric allows a writer to make informed choices about various aspects of the writing process. Every act of writing takes place in a specific **RHETORICAL SITUATION,** which is a situation or circumstance in which someone (a writer or speaker) must persuade an audience to do something, to change their minds, to influence them, etc. This "rhetorical situation" is the same concept that L. Lennie Erwin terms "the writing situation" in his discussion on how writing is different from speaking (see "The Difference between Speaking and Writing").

The three most basic, yet important components of a rhetorical situation are:

- **The purpose of writing** or **rhetorical aim** (the goal the writer is trying to achieve or argument the writer is trying to make)
- **The intended audience**
- **The writer/speaker**

These three elements of the rhetorical situation are in a constant and dynamic interrelation. All three are also necessary for communication through writing (or speaking) to take place. For example, if the writer is taken out of this equation, the text will not be created. Similarly, eliminating the text itself will leave the reader and writer, but without any means of conveying ideas between them, and so on.

Other components of the rhetorical situation include:

- **the medium** (the form of communication)
- **the allotted time for the message** (how much time does writer have? appropriate time to persuade?)
- **the political, social, or cultural implications, place, etc.**

All writing (or speaking) that is persuasive comes from a source of urgency or **EXIGENCE** –– a need to communicate the message.

NOTE

Please note that the term “rhetoric” also is used to mean someone speaking bombastic thoughts that are empty of meaning. The online Oxford dictionary defines rhetoric also as “language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect on its audience, but often regarded as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content” and the example they give is, “all we have from the Opposition is empty rhetoric.” Such a meaning is unfortunately derived from the emphasis of rhetoric on presentation and delivery. In this course, we will focus on rhetoric as a means of effective communication as we aspire to become skilled rhetoricians ourselves.

The following video focuses on the use of rhetoric from the viewpoint as a writer. As you watch, consider how the same elements hold true from the viewpoint of a reader.

YouTube Video

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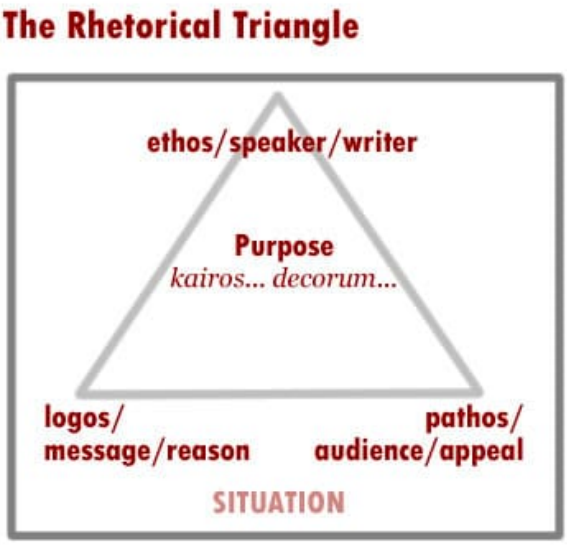
The Rhetorical Situation

When composing an essay, every writer must take into account the conditions under which the writing is produced and will be read. It is customary to represent the three key elements of the rhetorical situation as a triangle of writer, reader, and text, or, as they are represented on this image, as "communicator," "audience," and "message."

Figure 2.4.1: The Rhetorical Triangle



Source: St. Edward's University

Changing the characteristics of any of the elements depicted in the figure above will change the other elements as well. For example, with a change in the beliefs and values of the audience, the message will also change to accommodate those new beliefs.

What does this understanding of rhetoric have to do with academic and research writing? Everything, really. If you have ever had trouble with a writing assignment, chances are it was because you could not figure out the assignment's purpose. Or perhaps you did not understand very well who was your reader. It is hard to commit to purposeless writing done for no one in particular, which is how many students incorrectly approach academic writing.

Rhetorical Appeals

In order to persuade their readers, writers must use three types of proofs, or rhetorical appeals. They are **logos**, or logical appeal; **pathos**, or emotional appeal; and **ethos**, or ethical appeal, or appeal based on the character and credibility of the author. An additional appeal, called **kairos,** refers to whether a message is "of its time period." It is easy to notice that modern words "logical," "pathetic," and "ethical" are derived from those Greek words. In his work *Rhetoric*, Aristotle writes that the three appeals must be used together in every piece of persuasive discourse. An argument based on the appeal to logic, or emotions alone will not be an effective one.

Pathos

Pathos can best be described as the use of emotional appeal to sway another's opinion in a rhetorical argument. Emotion itself should require no definition, but it should be noted that effective 'pathetic' appeal (the use of pathos) is often used in ways that can cause anger or sorrow in the minds and hearts of the audience.

Pathos is often the rhetorical vehicle of public service announcements. A number of anti-smoking and passive smoking related commercials use pathos heavily. One of the more memorable videos shows an elderly man rising from the couch to meet his young grandson who, followed by his mother, is taking his first steps toward the grandfather. As the old man coaxes the young child forward, the grandfather begins to disappear. As the child walks through him the mother says "I wish your grandpa could see you now." The audience is left to assume that the grandfather has died, as the voice-over informs us that cigarette smoke kills so many people a year, with a closing statement, "be there for the ones you love." This commercial uses powerful words (like "love") and images to get at the emotions of the viewer, encouraging them to quit smoking. The goal is for the audience to become so "enlightened" and emotionally moved that the smoking viewers will never touch another cigarette.

Ethos

Ethos can be seen as the credibility that authors, writers, and speakers have when they present themselves in front of an audience. If, on the first day of class, your professor walked in, kind of bent over and looking like they had been out all night and picking their nose, how would you perceive that instructor? What would your view of the class he takes be? How confident would you be that this person knows what they are talking about?

Ethos encompasses a large number of different things which can include what a person wears, says, the words they use, their tone of voice, their credentials, their experience, their relationship with the audience, verbal and nonverbal behavior, criminal records, etc. At times, it can be as important to know who the person presenting the material is, as what they are saying about a topic.

Many companies, especially those big enough to afford famous spokespeople, will use celebrities in their ad campaigns to promote the sale of their products. Certain soft drink companies have used the likes of Ray Charles, Madonna, and Britney Spears to sell their products, and have been successful in doing so. The thing you need to ask yourself is: what do these celebrities add to the product other than their fame? Or is it their relationship with the audience that is the selling point?

Often times ads for medical products or even chewing gum might say that four out of five doctors/dentists recommend a certain product. Some commercials may even show a doctor in a white lab coat approving whatever is for sale. Now, provided that the person you are viewing is an actual doctor, this might be an example of a good ethos argument. On the other hand, if an automotive company uses a famous sports figure to endorse a product, we might wonder what that person knows about this product. The campaign and celebrity are not being used to inform the consumer, but rather to catch their attention with what is actually a faulty example of ethos.

How does this apply to writing? To begin, if you are going to cite an article about racial equality published by the Ku Klux Klan, or a Neo-Nazi organization, this might send up a red flag that this particular article might be written from a biased viewpoint. You need to research an author's background to re-assure yourself that what they are writing is unbiased. Also, if you are trying to present a formal project, you may want to increase your positive ethos by using appropriate terminology. Writing that "abortions are all whack and stuff" is probably not the best way to convince your audience of your point of view. It may happen that you as a writer adopt different voices for different assignments, but your word choice and your approach to the assignment should reflect what it is you want to say.

Logos

Logos is most easily defined as the logical appeal of an argument. Say that you are writing a paper on COVID-19 and you say "COVID-19 is just like the flu, so we should take the same measures as the flu." This statement is illogical because the virus itself, it's characteristics, and the overall situation is not like that of the flu. The statement has an illogical comparison. The COVID-19 virus is in a different family of viruses (corona viruses) than are the various influenza viruses, such as H1N1. COVID-19 displays a wide variety of symptoms (or no symptoms) and is much more contagious precisely because it can be transmitted without any symptoms. In addition, we have immunizations against the flu virus, which we do not yet have for the COVID-19 virus.

Kairos

"Kairos" is an important, but sometimes illusive, rhetorical term. The word itself means "time," and time is central to the concept, which means the "right time" or the "ideal moment" for communicating. Kairos is basically about the *context* of the moment: what's relevant to the audience at any particular time? Some rhetoricians describe *kairos* as a fourth "appeal" because rhetors frequently *appeal to* the urgency of a particular time or moment to engage an audience.

Timing, as they sometimes say, is everything. Rhetoric is about finding the best "available means" of persuasion "at any given moment" or "in any given case." Past, present, and future ("forensic," "epideictic," and "demonstrative" as the video, below, on labels them) are definitely part of the picture here, as well.

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

Video 2.4.1

Video: How to use rhetoric to get what you want by Camille A. Langston. *All Rights Reserved.* Standard YouTube license.

Summary: Chart

The chart below summarizes the key points relating to the rhetorical appeals:

Rhetorical Appeal	Abbreviated Definition	Reflective Questions
Ethos	Appeal to credibility *You may want to think of ethos as related to "ethics," or the moral principles of the writer: ethos is the author's way of establishing trust with his or her reader.*	• Why should I (the reader) read what the writer has written? • How does the author cite that he or she has something valid and important for me to read? • Does the author mention his or her education or professional experience, or convince me that he or she is a valid, educated, and experienced source?
Pathos	Appeal to emotion *You may want to think of pathos as "empathy," which pertains to the experience of or sensitivity toward emotion.*	• How is the writer trying to make me feel, or what has he or she written that makes me want to do something? • What specific parts of the author's writing make me feel happy, sad, inspired, dejected, and so on?

Logos	Appeal to logic *You may want to think of logos as "logic," because something that is logical "makes sense"—it is reasonable.*	• What evidence does the writer provide that convinces me that his or her argument is logical—that it makes sense? • What proof is the author offering me?
Kairos	Appeal to timeliness *You may want to think of kairos as the type of persuasion that pertains to "the right place and the right time."*	• Does the writer make claims that are particularly important given what is happening right now? • How is the author "making the most of the moment" or attempting to speak to the concern of his or her audience?

How the Appeals Work Together to Persuade

Understanding how logos, pathos, and ethos should work together is very important for writers who use research. Often, research writing assignments are written in a way that seems to emphasize logical proofs over emotional or ethical ones. Such logical proofs in research papers typically consist of factual information, statistics, examples, and other similar evidence. According to this view, writers of academic papers need to be unbiased and objective, and using logical proofs will help them to be that way.

Because of this emphasis on logical proofs, you may be less familiar with the kinds of pathetic and ethical proofs available to you. Pathetic appeals, or appeals to emotions of the audience were considered by ancient rhetoricians as important as logical proofs. Yet, writers are sometimes not easily convinced to use pathetic appeals in their writing. As modern rhetoricians and authors of the influential book Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student (1998), Edward P.J. Corbett and Robert Connors said, “People are rather sheepish about acknowledging that their opinions can be affected by their emotions” (86). According to Corbett, many of us think that there may be something wrong about using emotions in argument. But, I agree with Connors, pathetic proofs are not only admissible in argument, but necessary (86-89). The most basic way of evoking appropriate emotional responses in your audience, according to Corbett, is the use of vivid descriptions (94). This is demonstrated at the beginning of many newspaper and magazine feature articles.

Using ethical appeals, or appeals based on the character of the writer, involves establishing and maintaining your credibility in the eyes of your readers. In other words, when writing, think about how you are presenting yourself to your audience. Do you give your readers enough reasons to trust you and your argument, or do you give them reasons to doubt your authority and your credibility? Consider all the times when your decision about the merits of a given argument was affected by the person or people making the argument. For example, when watching television news, are you predisposed against certain cable networks and more inclined toward others because you trust them more?

So, how can writers establish credible personas for their audiences? One way to do that is through external research. Conducting research and using it well in your writing help you with the factual proofs (logos), but it also shows your readers that you, as the author, have done your homework and know what you are talking about. This knowledge, the sense of your authority that using logos creates among your readers, will help you be a more effective writer.

The logical, pathetic, and ethical appeals work in a dynamic combination with one another. It is sometimes hard to separate one kind of proof from another and the methods by which the writer achieves the desired rhetorical effect. If your research contains data that is likely to cause your readers to be emotional, it can enhance the pathetic aspect of your argument. The key to using the three appeals is to use them in combination with each other and in moderation. It is impossible to construct a successful argument by relying too much on one or two appeals while neglecting the others.

Using Rhetorical Appeals in Your Own Writing

Identifying these appeals in persuasive writing is a valuable skill to learn; understanding how to use these appeals in your persuasive writing can prove to be an even more powerful ability to develop. To begin, several ways to appeal to logic exist. Consider the structure and quality of your argument. Digital strategist and rhetorician, Daniel T. Richards, asks writers to consider these questions: "Does your conclusion follow from your premises? Will your audience be able to follow the progression? Does your argument provide sufficient evidence for your audience to be convinced?" To improve the quality of your argument, consider:

- Referring to facts and figures.
- Citing relevant, current statistics.
- Providing examples.
- Including and addressing an opposing view.
- Using visual representations.

In addition, as Lane, McKee, and McIntyre recommend in their article regarding logos: maintain consistency in your argument, and avoid fallacious, or faulty, appeals to logic. For example, in "Fallacious Logos," they provide an overview of several false appeals to logic, including the false dilemma, which assumes that there are only two options when there are more.

Writers may employ several methods to appeal to pathos. Read "Pathos" to explore several suggestions which include:

- Referring to other emotionally compelling stories.
- Citing stark, startling statistics that will invoke a specific emotion in audience members.
- Showing empathy and/or understanding for an opposing view.
- Using humor, if appropriate.

However, in your efforts to appeal to the audience's emotions, avoid relying on faulty appeals. For example, "Fallacious Pathos" points out that using emotional words that evidence does not support leads to the argument by emotive language fallacy.

In pondering how to effectively employ rhetorical devices and aptly avoid fallacies, writers tend to miss the relationship among the rhetorical appeals. Consequently, there is something very right about such arguments as the one advanced by Richards, who argues that "your argument could be sound. It could even be emotionally compelling. But if your audience doesn't trust you, if they don't think you have their interest at heart, it won't matter" ("The 3 Rhetorical Appeals"). Enhance the effectiveness of appeals to pathos and logos with appeals to ethos.

To demonstrate your credibility, try:

- Referring to relevant work and/or life experience.
- Citing your relevant awards, certificates, and/or degrees.
- Providing evidence from relevant, current, and credible sources.
- Carefully proofreading your work, and asking a few other people to so as well.

Additionally, follow McKee and McIntyre's advice in "Fallacious Ethos." McKee and McIntyre provide specific examples of fallacious ethos.

Conversely, appeals to kairos can help you make use of the particular moment (Pantelides, McIntyre, and McKee). Ask yourself if you can capitalize on any of the audience's fast-approaching moments to create a sense of urgency. However, avoid false appeals to kairos. Read "Fallacious Appeals to Kairos" to learn more about this topic.

Good writers write to win. As such, rhetorical appeals underlie much of the successful persuasive writing in society, whether in the form of written arguments, television commercials, or educational campaigns. As previously discussed, some thoughtful, strategic anti-smoking campaigns have reduced smoking-related diseases and death. Additionally, Ariel Chernin, advertising researcher, observes that a large body of literature proves that food marketing affects children's food preferences. Similarly, appealing to logos, pathos, ethos, and kairos in your persuasive writing can help you achieve your goals. Approaching rhetorical appeals from the inside out—from the perspective of the writer—one can note their effectiveness in persuasive writing, and one can write to win.

Contributors

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2.5: Logical Fallacies - How to Spot Them and Avoid Making Them

Logical Fallacies -- Definition

As you rewrite, review, and revise your logical argument, be aware of logical fallacies, or common errors in thinking that can weaken a logical argument.

Fallacies are errors or tricks of reasoning. We can call a fallacy an *error* of reasoning if it occurs accidentally; we call it a *trick* of reasoning if a speaker or writer uses it in order to deceive or manipulate the audience. Fallacies can be either formal or informal.

Figure:

(Decorative image of a traffic sign that says "Oops!") Image authored by Cripi on Pixabay. *CC0: No Rights Reserved*

Most formal fallacies are errors of logic: the conclusion doesn't really follow from, or is not supported by, the premises. Either the premises are untrue or the argument is invalid. For example, the following argument contains an error in assuming that one thing and only that one thing causes a particular outcome: "Nora feeds Johnny eggplant every day, and Johnny is really healthy; therefore, we should feed our Sally more eggplant." While it may be true that eggplant is a healthy food, Johnny's eggplant consumption is assuredly not the only factor contributing to his health. So it does not necessarily follow that Sally should also eat eggplant every day. Formal fallacies are created when the relationship between premise and conclusion does not hold up, or when premises are unsound.

Informal fallacies take many forms and are widespread in everyday discourse. Very often they involve bringing irrelevant information into an argument, or are based on assumptions that, when examined, prove to be incorrect. For example, the following statement plays inaccurately to authority by assuming that one person only knows best, without bringing facts, multiple informed expert opinions, or relevant research into the argument: "Our governor supports a single-payer health care system for the state, so we should, too." While the governor may have information about health care that the average citizen does not have access to, merely the fact that the governor supports a particular cause is not a reason to agree. Informal fallacies often result from the misuse of language and/or evidence.

Whether a fallacy is an error or a trick, whether it is formal or informal, its use undercuts the validity and soundness of any argument. For example, if someone defines a key term in her argument in an ambiguous, vague, or circular way, her argument will appear very weak to a critical audience.

In addition, when listeners or readers spot questionable reasoning or unfair attempts at audience manipulation, more than the

author's argument (*logos*) may be compromised. Their evaluation of the credibility of the speaker/writer (*ethos*), and perhaps their ability to connect with that speaker on the level of shared values (*pathos*), also may be compromised. At the very least, the presence of fallacies will suggest to an audience that the speaker or writer lacks argumentative skill.

Evaluating an Argument for Logical Fallacies

Figure:

One way to go about evaluating an argument for fallacies is to return to the concept of the three types of support for claims: ethos, logos, and pathos.

As a quick reminder,

- Ethos is an argument that appeals to ethics, authority, and/or credibility.
- Logos is an argument that appeals to logic.
- Pathos is an argument that appeals to emotion.

Classifying fallacies as fallacies of ethos, logos, or pathos will help you both to understand their nature and to recognize them when you encounter them. Please keep in mind, however, that some fallacies may fit into multiple categories.

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

Evaluating an Appeal to Ethos

When you evaluate an appeal to ethos, you examine how successfully a speaker or writer establishes authority or credibility with her intended audience. You are asking yourself what elements of the essay or speech would cause an audience to feel that the author is (or is not) trustworthy and credible.

A good speaker or writer leads the audience to feel comfortable with her knowledge of a topic. The audience sees her as someone worth listening to—a clear or insightful thinker, or at least someone who is well-informed and genuinely interested in the topic.

Some of the questions you can ask yourself as you evaluate an author's ethos may include the following:

- Has the writer or speaker cited her sources or in some way made it possible for the audience to access further information about the issue?
- Does she demonstrate familiarity with different opinions and perspectives?
- Does she provide complete and accurate information about the issue?
- Does she use the evidence fairly? Does she avoid selective use of evidence or other types of manipulation of data?
- Does she speak respectfully about people who may have opinions and perspectives different from her own?

- Does she use unbiased language?
- Does she avoid excessive reliance on emotional appeals?
- Does she accurately convey the positions of people with whom she disagrees?
- Does she acknowledge that an issue may be complex or multifaceted?
- Does her education or experience give her credibility as someone who should be listened to on this issue?

Some of the above questions may strike you as relevant to an evaluation of logos as well as ethos—questions about the completeness and accuracy of information and whether it is used fairly. In fact, illogical thinking and the misuse of evidence may lead an audience to draw conclusions not only about the person making the argument but also about the logic of an argument.

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal to Ethos

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

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

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

Fallacies that Misuse an Appeal to Ethos

Ad hominem: attacking the person making an argument rather than the argument itself. Latin for "argument against the person" or "argument toward the person." Basically, an ad hominem argument goes like this: Person 1 makes claim X. There is something objectionable about Person 1. Therefore claim X is false.

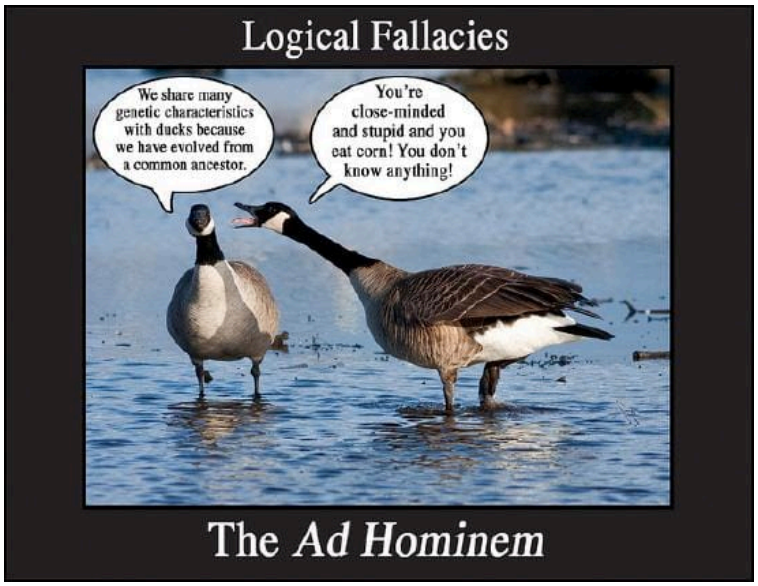

Figure:

False authority: relying on claims of expertise when the claimed expert (a) lacks adequate background/credentials in the relevant field, (b) departs in major ways from the consensus in the field, or (c) is biased, e.g., has a financial stake in the outcome.

Example: “Dr. X is an engineer, and ***he*** doesn’t believe in global warming.”

Guilt by association: linking the person making an argument to an unpopular person or group.

Example: “My opponent is a card-carrying member of the Communist Party.”

Poisoning the well: undermining an opponent’s credibility before they get a chance to speak.

Example: “The prosecution is going to bring up a series or so-called experts who are getting a lot of money to testify here today.”

Transfer fallacy: associating the argument with someone or something popular or respected; hoping that the positive associations will “rub off” onto the argument.

Examples: In politics, decorating a stage with red, white, and blue flags and bunting; in advertising, using pleasant or wholesome settings as the backdrop for print or video ads.

Name-calling: labeling an opponent with words that have negative connotations in an effort to undermine the opponent’s credibility.

Example: “These rabble-rousers are nothing but feminazis.”

Plain folk: presenting yourself as (or associating your position with) ordinary people with whom you hope your audience will identify; arguers imply that they or their supporters are trustworthy because they are "common people" rather than members of the elite.

Example: “Who would you vote for—someone raised in a working-class neighborhood who has the support of Joe the Plumber or some elitist whose daddy sent him to a fancy school?”

Testimonial fallacy (argument from authority): inserting an endorsement of the argument by someone who is popular or respected but who lacks expertise or authority in the area under discussion.

Example: “I’m not a doctor, but I play one on TV”—a famous example of a celebrity endorsement for a cough syrup (Deis, 2011, n.p.).

Figure:

The most general structure of this argument runs something like the following: Person A claims that Person A is a respected scientist or other authority; therefore, the claim they make is true.

Evaluating an Appeal to Logos

When you evaluate an appeal to logos, you consider how logical the argument is and how well-supported it is in terms of evidence. You are asking yourself what elements of the essay or speech would cause an audience to believe that the argument is (or is not) logical and supported by appropriate evidence.

To evaluate whether the evidence is appropriate, apply the **STAR** criteria: how **S**ufficient,**T**ypical;**A**ccurate, and **R**elevant is the evidence?

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal

Diagramming the argument – identifying the main claim and the main supporting points or premises – can help you determine if an appeal to logos is manipulative. Write out the main claim or conclusion. Then identify the supporting claims or premises. Are the premises true? Does the conclusion follow logically from the premises? Is there sufficient, typical, accurate, and relevant evidence to support the reasoning? Is the speaker or author attempting to divert your attention from the real issues? These are some of the elements you might consider while evaluating an argument for the use of logos.

Pay particular attention to numbers, statistics, findings, and quotes used to support an argument. Be critical of the source and do your own investigation of the “facts.” Maybe you’ve heard or read that half of all marriages in America will end in divorce. It is so often discussed that we assume it must be true. Careful research will show that the original marriage study was flawed, and divorce rates in America have steadily declined since 1985 (Peck, 1993). If there is no scientific evidence, why do we continue to believe it? Part of the reason might be that it supports the commonly held idea of the dissolution of the American family.

Deductive Logic

An argument using deductive logic is one that works from the top to the bottom. It begins with what is known as a "major premise," adds a "minor premise," and attempts to reach a conclusion. A major premise is a statement that comments about a large group, a minor premise refers to a single member, and the conclusion attempts to prove that because this single member is a part of the larger group, it must, therefore, also have the trait named in the major premise.

For example:

> Now, if it is true that men are tall, and that Bob is a man, then we can safely infer that Bob must be tall. However, beware the logical fallacy. Though it may be true that in certain cultures men are, on average, taller than women, certainly this is not always the case. Being that our major premise is not altogether true, we can now say that this argument is flawed. Further, we might ask what our definition of "tall" is. Tall is different if we are talking about the average population, different for basketball players. Also, what is a man? Are transgendered individuals included? We see that the problem becomes far more complex the more we look into it.

Inductive Logic

While some would argue that a deductive argument works from the top down, toward a conclusion, and that an inductive argument works from the bottom up. This is mildly misleading. What is meant by this is that an inductive logical argument begins with a firm affirmation of truth, a conclusive statement. By getting the audience to agree with this statement, the argument moves to the next "logical" step. It proceeds in this manner until the argument has led you from one seemingly reasonable conclusion to another that you may not have originally agreed with. Take the following as an example. (Move through the argument slowly, making sure you understand and agree with each step in the process -- and please forgive the religious content, you'll come to see it is irrelevant anyway).

> The human soul is inherently free. This is its very nature. We are confined to our mortal, earthly bodies, but our souls must be kept free, or the nature of the soul is entirely negated. If one chooses to believe in a soul, they can only believe that it embraces this (vague idea of) freedom.
>
> At conception, a child is given a soul. Some may argue that that happens after birth, but if those very same persons are pro-life, they confuse their arguments. Thus, if someone is pro-life, and believes in a soul, they must believe in the freedom of that soul, and also accept that the soul is granted upon conception.

A soul cannot die. By the same means by which it is free over the body, a soul claims immortality while the body decomposes and is ended. To deny that a soul is immortal is again to deny the very essence of a soul. Thus, if someone is pro-life, and believes in a soul, they must believe in the freedom of that soul, the immortality of the soul, and also accept that the soul is granted upon conception.

A soul cannot be born. It is immortal and cannot die, it is not earthly, it forever exists, and cannot be born. There are tales in Greek mythology of Athena's birth, yet she is born from her father's head a fully decorated woman. She was not born. She existed previously, as Milton writes the Son in Paradise Lost. If one accepts the Bible's teachings, there can be no reincarnation, no other form of birth, or rebirth. Thus, if someone is pro-life, and believes in a soul, and does not accept reincarnation, they must believe in the freedom of that soul, the immortality of the soul that is always and forever (which cannot be born and cannot die), and also accept that the soul is granted upon conception.

A soul being always an essence, and not being able to be reincarnated, can only exist outside of the body, somewhere, until the act of conception occurs. That soul must then be placed in the body that was forever intended to receive it, as it belongs nowhere else. The soul is fated to that one body. Thus, if someone is pro-life, and believes in a soul, and does not accept reincarnation, namely a practicing Catholic, they must also believe in the freedom of the soul, and in the concept of fate. Fate, however, completely opposes the idea of freedom. One cannot then believe in a soul, for it immediately enforces a belief in fate which directly negates the belief in the soul. If our actions are written in a Divine plan, we are not free to make our own choices. Every action has been scripted.

Don't worry, it must be that you were meant to read this.

Here's a sample inductive argument by Ben Doberstein.

Having seen this, some might say that the argument defeats Catholicism from an atheist standpoint. Others might find that it argues for the secularization of religion. Still, there are ways in which it supports Catholicism at the same time.

Though the argument might seem as if it is disagreeing with the Catholic religion, and some would agree that it is, we must always be looking for the logical fallacy. Upon closer inspection, you may notice that all this argument truly does, in one reading of the text, is to explain the complexity of God through the mind of a human. Catholicism has argued since the beginning that God is impossible to fully explain using the conceptions of man. In that way, this argument only supports that conclusion.

Be aware that there will be logic fallacies hidden in almost every argument. If there is more than one side to an argument, such as in religious or political debates, it is most likely because the argument is impossible to prove. Hence, there is a logical fallacy in the argument.

Fallacies that misuse appeals to logos or attempt to manipulate the logic of an argument are discussed below.

Fallacies that Misuse an Appeal to Logos

Hasty generalization: jumping to conclusions based upon an unrepresentative sample or insufficient evidence.

Example: "10 of the last 14 National Spelling Bee Champions have been Indian American. Indian Americans must all be great spellers!"

Appeal to ignorance—true believer's form: arguing along the lines that if an opponent can't prove something ***isn't*** the case, then it is reasonable to believe that it ***is*** the case; transfers the burden of proof away from the person making the claim (the proponent).

Example: "You can't prove that extraterrestrials ***haven't*** visited earth, so it is reasonable to believe that they ***have*** visited earth."

Appeal to ignorance—skeptic's form: confusing absence of evidence with evidence of absence; assumes that if you cannot ***now*** prove something exists, then it is shown that it doesn't exist.

Example: "There's no proof that starting classes later in the day will improve the performance of our high school students; therefore, this change in schedule will not work."

Begging the question: circular argument because the premise is the same as the claim that you are trying to prove.

Example: “This legislation is sinful because it is the wrong thing to do.”

False dilemma: misuse of the either/or argument; presenting only two options when other choices exist

Example: “Either we pass this ordinance or there will be rioting in the streets.”

Post hoc ergo propter hoc: Latin phrase meaning “after this, therefore because of this”; confuses correlation with causation by concluding that an event preceding a second event must be the cause of that second event.

Example: “My child was diagnosed with autism after receiving vaccinations. That is proof that vaccines are to blame.”

Non-sequitur: Latin for “does not follow”; the conclusion cannot be inferred from the premises because there is a break in the logical connection between a claim and the premises that are meant to support it, either because a premise is untrue (or missing) or because the relationship between premises does not support the deduction stated in the claim.

Example (untrue premise): “If she is a Radford student, she is a member of a sorority. She is a Radford student. Therefore she is a member of a sorority.”

Smoke screen: avoiding the real issue or a tough question by introducing an unrelated topic as a distraction; sometimes called a **red herring**.

Example: “My opponent says I am weak on crime, but I have been one of the most reliable participants in city council meetings.”

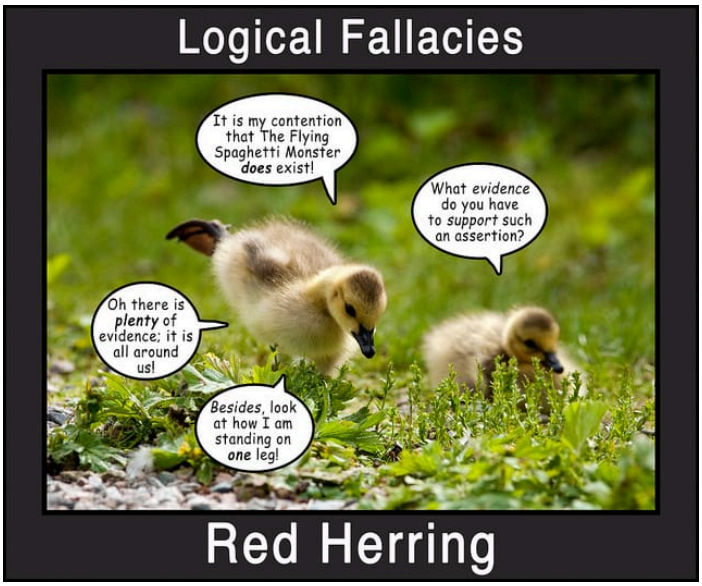

Figure: (Visual example of a red herring fallacy.)

Image by Mark Klotz on flickr *CC BY-NC: Attribution-NonCommercial*

The red herring is as much a debate tactic as it is a logical fallacy. It is a fallacy of distraction and is committed when a listener attempts to divert an arguer from his argument by introducing another topic. This can be one of the most frustrating, and effective, fallacies to observe.The fallacy gets its name from fox hunting, specifically from the practice of using smoked herrings, which are red, to distract hounds from the scent of their quarry. Just as a hound may be prevented from catching a fox by distracting it with a red herring, so an arguer may be prevented from proving his point by distracting him with a tangential issue.

Straw man: pretending to criticize an opponent’s position but actually misrepresenting his or her view as simpler and/or more extreme than it is and therefore easier to refute than the original or actual position; unfairly undermines credibility of ***claim*** if not ***source*** of claim.

Example: “Senator Smith says we should cut back the Defense budget. His position is that we should let down our defenses and just trust our enemies not to attack us!”

Evaluating an Appeal to Pathos

People may be uninterested in an issue unless they can find a personal connection to it, so a communicator may try to connect to her audience by evoking emotions or by suggesting that author and audience share attitudes, beliefs, and values—in other words, by making an appeal to pathos. Even in formal writing, such as academic books or journals, an author often will try to present an issue in such a way as to connect to the feelings or attitudes of his audience.

When you evaluate pathos, you are asking whether a speech or essay arouses the audience's interest and sympathy. You are looking for the elements of the essay or speech that might cause the audience to feel (or not feel) an emotional connection to the content.

An author may use an audience's attitudes, beliefs, or values as a kind of foundation for his argument—a layer that the writer knows is already in place at the outset of the argument. So one of the questions you can ask yourself as you evaluate an author's use of pathos is whether there are points at which the writer or speaker makes statements assuming that the audience shares his feelings or attitudes. For example, in an argument about the First Amendment, does the author seem to take it for granted that the audience is religious?

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal to Pathos

Up to a certain point, an appeal to pathos can be a legitimate part of an argument. For example, a writer or speaker may begin with an anecdote showing the effect of a law on an individual. This anecdote will be a means of the author gaining an audience's attention for an argument in which they use evidence and reason to present their full case as to why the law should/should not be repealed or amended. In such a context, engaging the emotions, values, or beliefs of the audience is a legitimate tool, the effective use of which should lead you to give the author high marks.

An appropriate appeal to pathos is different than trying to unfairly play upon the audience's feelings and emotions through fallacious, misleading, or excessively emotional appeals. Such a manipulative use of pathos may alienate the audience or cause them to "tune out". An example would be the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) commercials featuring the song "*In the Arms on an Angel*" and footage of abused animals. Even Sarah McLachlan, the singer and spokesperson featured in the commercials, admits that she changes the channel because they are too depressing (Brekke, 2014).

Even if an appeal to pathos is not manipulative, such an appeal should complement rather than replace reason and evidence-based argument. In addition to making use of pathos, authors must establish their credibility (ethos) and must supply reasons and evidence (logos) in support of their position. An author who essentially replaces logos and ethos with pathos alone should be given low marks.

See below for the most common fallacies that misuse appeals to pathos.

Fallacies that Misuse an Appeal to Pathos

Appeal to fear: using scare tactics; emphasizing threats or exaggerating possible dangers.

Example: "Without this additional insurance, you could find yourself broke and homeless."

Appeal to guilt and **appeal to pity**: trying to evoke an emotional reaction that will cause the audience to behave sympathetically even if it means disregarding the issue at hand.

Example: "I know I missed assignments, but if you fail me, I will lose my financial aid and have to drop out."

Appeal to popularity (bandwagon): urging tthe audience to follow a course of action because "everyone does it."

Example: "Nine out of ten shoppers have switched to Blindingly-Bright-Smile Toothpaste."

Slippery Slope: making an unsupported or inadequately supported claim that "One thing inevitably leads to another." This may be considered a fallacy of logos as well as pathos but is placed in this section because it often is used to evoke the emotion of fear.

Example: "We can't legalize marijuana; if we do, then the next thing you know people will be strung out on heroin."

Appeal to the people: also called **stirring symbols** fallacy; the communicator distracts the readers or listeners with symbols that are very meaningful to them, with strong associations or connotations.

Example: This fallacy is referred to in the sentence “That politician always wraps himself in the flag.”

Appeal to tradition: people have done it a certain way for a long time; assumes that what has been customary in the past is correct and proper.

Example: “A boy always serves as student-body president; a girl always serves as secretary.”

Loaded-Language and other emotionally charged uses of language: using slanted or biased language, including Goodness terms, devil terms, euphemisms, and dysphemisms.

Example: In the sentence “Cutting access to food stamps would encourage personal responsibility,” the "goodness" term is “personal responsibility.” It might seem as if it would be hard to argue against “personal responsibility” or related "goodness" terms such as “independence” and “self-reliance.” However, it would require a definition of “personal responsibility,” combined with evidence from studies of people’s behavior in the face of food stamp or other benefit reductions, to argue that cutting access to food stamps would lead to the intended results.

Conclusion

Fallacies can crop up whenever definitions, inferences, and facts are at issue. Once we become familiar with fallacies we may start to see them everywhere. That can be good and bad. Since persuasion is ever-present, it is good to be on guard against various hidden persuaders. But whether a persuasive strategy is considered fallacious may be dependent on context. For example, we *expect* advertisements, political speeches, and editorials on public policy or ethical issues to try to sway us emotionally.

However, as a writer of logical argument, your task is to evaluate your draft in order to identify and eliminate inappropriate logical fallacies, which often try to argue through emotional means, personal attack, or inappropriate evidence and conclusions. Your purpose, as a writer of logical argument, is to get your reader to see the value in what you’re asserting, to get that person to say “I understand and accept the validity of your point of view,” even though he may still not agree.

Exercise 1

Identifying Hasty Generalizations

A generalization is a reasonably true statement based on statistically valid data. A hasty generalization is a statement that is true in general but may not be true in any particular case. A generalization becomes a hasty generalization when the statement is assumed to be true about an individual or when the generalization is statistically invalid. Hasty generalizations are one of the most common logical fallacies.

Decide whether the following statements are generalizations or hasty generalizations:

A. Dogs developed from wolves.

B. You’ll be a victim of a crime if you are out between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m.

C. Crime happens more often in cities than in suburbs.

D. Women are more neurotic than men (according to a fired Google employee manifesto).

E. Pit bulls are killers.

F. Billionaires are greedy.

Exercise 2

Identifying Logical Fallacies and Appeals

Individually or in groups, identify the logical fallacies (by name) or appeals in the following statements.

1. Pilots claim to have seen unidentified flying objects (spacecraft from other planets). Pilots are trained in observation and are reliable, so UFOs must exist.

2. The universe has all the properties to support life; therefore, it was designed specifically to support life.

3. What are skeptics of alternative medicines afraid of?

4. There is no evidence to show ghosts exist, so ghosts do not exist.

5. Mammals live on land. Whales are mammals. Therefore, whales must live on land.

6. The number of transistors in a dense integrated circuit doubles approximately every two years.

7. More people in the world smoke than in the past. The rate of people dying from lung cancer is declining. Smoking does not cause lung cancer.

8. Drinking alcohol increases one's risk for breast cancer. Katie drinks four glasses of wine per week. She will develop breast cancer.

9. Computers are the brains of machines, so people should not need much sleep for their brains to work properly.

10. The earliest remains of *Homo erectus* are in Africa and Asia, so the species originated in one of those places.

11. The extinction of large mammals will inevitably lead to the extinction of humans.

12. Humans are destroying Earth, so we should colonize Mars so we can survive.

13. We don't know how placebos work, so they must not work.

Logical Fallacies Review

The following video, while relatively lengthy, clearly explains many common logical fallacies such as hasty generalization, slippery slope, and more. As such, it provides a good review of the fallacies that you should be identifying and editing out of your logical argument essay drafts.

Video: Logical Fallacies by US Represented. *All Rights Reserved.* Standard YouTube license.

Contributors:

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2.6: Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetorical Analysis

We have heard that “you can’t judge a book by its cover,” but, in fact, we do it all the time. Daily we find ourselves in situations where we are forced to make snap judgments. Each day we meet different people, encounter unfamiliar situations, and see media that asks us to do, think, buy, and act in all sorts of ways.

In fact, our saturation in media and its images is one of the reasons why learning to do rhetorical analysis is so important. The more we know about how to analyze situations and draw informed conclusions, the better we can become about making savvy judgments about the people, situations, and media we encounter.

Rhetorical Analysis is a high-order critical thinking skill. It takes practice to become effective at formal and intentional analysis of text and media. An ***analysis*** breaks a subject apart to study it closely, and from this inspection, ideas for writing emerge. When writing assignments call on you to analyze, they require you to identify the parts of the subject (parts of an ad, parts of a short story, parts of Hamlet’s character), and then show how these parts fit or don’t fit together to create some larger effect or meaning. Your interpretation of how these parts fit together constitutes your claim or thesis, and the task of your essay is then to present an argument defending your interpretation as a valid or plausible one to make. Our biggest bit of advice about analysis is to don't try to do it all in your head. Analysis works best when you put all the cards on the table, so to

speak. Identify and isolate the parts of your analysis, and record important features and characteristics of each one. As patterns emerge, you sort and connect these parts in meaningful ways.. The critical reading skills you are developing–like differentiating fact from opinion and making inferences–will help you become a more savvy consumer and a more discerning citizen.

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Facts versus Opinions

Facts

Facts are statements that can be definitely proven using objective data. The statement that is a fact is absolutely valid. In other words, the statement can be pronounced as true or false. For example, 2 + 2 = 4. This expression identifies a true statement, or a fact, because it can be proved with objective data.

Opinions

Opinions are personal views, or judgments. An opinion is what an individual believes about a particular subject. However, an opinion in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion. Consider the credibility of expert opinions. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience; this credibility is sometimes called "ethos" and is one way that we make our arguments persuasive. For example, you seek the opinion of your dentist when it comes to the health of your gums, and you seek the opinion of your mechanic when it comes to the maintenance of your car. Both have knowledge and credentials in those respective fields, which is why their opinions matter to you. But the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should they offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa. In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions. Relying on one or the other will likely lose more of your audience than it gains.

Media and Rhetoric

Media is one of the most important places where this kind of analysis needs to happen. *Rhetoric*—the way we use language and images to persuade—is what makes media work. Think of all the media you see and hear every day: Twitter, television shows, web pages, billboards, text messages, podcasts, and more. Media is constantly asking you to buy something, act in some way, believe something to be true, or interact with others in a specific manner. Understanding rhetorical messages is essential to help us become informed consumers, but it also helps evaluate the ethics of messages, how they affect us personally, and how they affect society.

Take, for example, a commercial for men's deodorant that tells you that you'll be irresistible to women if you use their product. This campaign doesn't just ask you to buy the product, though. It also asks you to trust the company's credibility, or ethos, and to believe the messages they send about how men and women interact, about sexuality, and about what constitutes a healthy body. You have to decide whether or not you will choose to buy the product and how you will choose to respond to the messages that the commercial sends.

Because media rhetoric surrounds us, it is important to understand how rhetoric works. If we refuse to stop and think about how and why it persuades us, we can become mindless consumers who buy into arguments about what makes us value ourselves and what makes us happy.

Rhetoric as Social Influence

Our worlds are full of these kinds of social influences. As we interact with other people and with media, we are continually creating and interpreting rhetoric. In the same way that you decide how to process, analyze or ignore these messages, you create them. You probably think about what your clothing will communicate as you go to a job interview or get ready for a date. You are use rhetoric when trying to persuade your parents to send you money or your friends to see the movie that interests you. When you post to your blog or favorite social media app, you are using rhetoric.

Most of our actions are persuasive in nature. What we choose to wear (tennis shoes vs. flip flops), where we shop (Whole Foods Market vs. Wal-Mart), what we eat (organic vs. fast food), or even the way we send information (snail mail vs. text message) can work to persuade others.

Chances are you have grown up learning to interpret and analyze these types of rhetoric. They become so commonplace that we don't realize how often and how quickly we are able to perform this kind of rhetorical analysis. When your teacher walked in on the first day of class, you probably didn't think to yourself, "I think I'll do some rhetorical analysis on her clothing and draw some conclusions about what kind of personality she might have and whether I think I'll like her." And, yet, you probably were able to come up with some conclusions based on the evidence you had.

However, when this same teacher hands you an advertisement, photograph or article and asks you to write a rhetorical analysis of it, you might have been baffled or felt a little overwhelmed. The good news is that many of the analytical processes that you already use to interpret the rhetoric around you are the same ones that you'll use for these assignments.

Exercise 1

- Watch the *Mad Men* advertising pitch for “The Kodak Carousel,” "Mad Men - It's not a slide projector, or a wheel... it's a Carousel" by SpeechCoachLA, and think about the way the advertisers use images and language to persuade...this is rhetoric!
- Answer the following questions in a file/document:
  1. What is it about the advertising pitch that is supposed to connect with the public and get them to buy the product, in this case the Kodak Carousel?
  2. What is it about nostalgia (Don Draper said in Greek it means “the pain of an old wound”) that is more powerful than memory?
  3. Is the advertising pitch by Don Draper effective at persuading the public? Why or why not?

You will be graded on the following criteria:

Rhetorical Analysis and Media				
Criteria				
Describe an author’s point of view and tone				
Analyze an author’s effectiveness in achieving intended purpose				
Explains why advertising pitch will appeal to consumer				
Explains what it is about nostalgia that is more powerful than memory				
Explains why advertising pitch is or is not effective at persuasion				

Exercise 2: Further study

1. Download Backpacks vs Briefcases: Steps Toward Rhetorical Analysis.
2. Annotate the text.
3. Answer the following questions in a document/file:
   1. What are the implications of rhetorical analysis? (p. 3, p. 46)
   2. What is the “rhetorical situation”? (p. 5, p.48)
   3. What is the argument in rhetorical analysis? (p. 9, p. 52)
   4. What does context have to do with Rhetorical Analysis? (p.12, p.55)
   5. Why is rhetorical analysis important in college? (p.14, p.57)
   6. What are examples of rhetoric that you see and hear on a daily basis?
   7. What are some ways that you create rhetoric?

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2.7: Key Takeaways

- Writing is a way of entering a conversation, including the larger civil discourse in society. Academic writing is part of this, just as texting with friends in writing as a way of entering into conversation.
- Unlike in spoken conversation, in writing, you have to create the context and tone on your own.
- Developing your “writer’s sense” about communicating within the writing situation is the most important thing you should learn in first-year composition.
- Much more is expected of college students cognitively in college reading and writing.
- Critical thinking for problem solving is an analytical process that we practice intensely in college and use every day to various degrees. It can be learned through practice.
- The rhetorical appeals -- ethos, pathos, logos -- need to be used in balance with kairos for effective argumentation.
- Identifying logical fallacies and inappropriate appeals to pathos are important for your writing and ideas to be taken seriously.
- Rhetorical analysis allows us to understand how the messages that surround us function.

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3: THE READING-WRITING CONNECTION

3.1: The Reading-Writing Connection

3.2: Critical Reading and Rhetorical Context

3.3: Reading Strategies - Previewing

3.4 Annotation Basics

3.4: Questioning Strategies

3.5: Inferences

3.6: Vocabulary

3.7: Reading Strategies - Taking Notes

3.8: Main Ideas and Supporting Details

3.9: Paraphrasing and Summarizing

3.10: How to Read Like a Writer

3.11: Key Takeaways

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3.1: The Reading-Writing Connection

Importance of Reading

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.

Figure: Image from Pixabay

The Reading-Writing Connection

Creating New Meanings

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 because writers who do not read and do not actively engage with their reading, have little to say to others.

Engaging in a Dialog

As rhetorical processes, reading and writing cannot exist without the other. The goal of a good writer 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 back 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. They are not very useful because, if different people have different opinions that they are not willing to change or adjust, such people cannot work or think together. 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.

Active Reading

Successful students approach reading with a strategy that helps them get the most out of their reading. These students read actively. They look for the main idea of the material, its themes, and for words they do not understand. The opposite of reading actively is reading passively. Passive readers simply skip over things they do not understand and have difficulty understanding the material as a result. In this course, we are going to practice active reading. You will find that active reading is more enjoyable, lets you understand more of what you have read, and leads to better test scores.

The first part of active reading is to read through the material once while making notes about anything you find interesting or important. It is okay to not understand everything the first time through. Make a note next to any words you may need to look up later. When you finish, stop for a few minutes and think about what you just read. What is your first impression? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not? What was the most memorable part of the reading? Did something in it surprise you? Take a few minutes to add these thoughts to the notes you took while reading.

Now, take a break and go do something else. Go for a walk, run an errand, or take care of some chores. Allow yourself to absorb what you read without thinking too much about it or worrying about what you did not understand. When you come back, use a dictionary to look up the definitions of the words you marked earlier because you were not sure what they meant. Look at any sections you did not understand the first time through and see if they make more sense now. If something is still unclear, review your notes and briefly read the material a second time. Any confusing parts will likely be much clearer now, and if they are not, talk to your teacher or a tutor about them.

Exercise 1 3.1.1

Literacy4DS: "Active Reading"Page

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 adopting the active reading advice you learned in the Active Reading Strategies article above.

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

Video 3.1.1

Video: 10 Active Reading Strategies//Study Smart Study Less by Ana Mascara. *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

- 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-aways" from the video? In other words, what are two or thre things from this video that you want to remember?

Print vs. Online Reading

In an online educational environment, you're probably going to do more reading than listening. You may do some of your reading in printed form – say, an assigned novel or textbook – but some of it might also be online in the form of a webpage and forums. Reading online isn't the same as reading in print, so you should practice some strategies that will improve your online reading comprehension and speed. And some of the tactics you learn about here will help you with any kind of reading you might do, not just the stuff that's online.

Figure: Image from Pixabay

So what do we mean when we say that reading print is different from reading online?

- First, when you read something – let's say, a book – that's been printed by a reputable publishing house, you can assume that the work is authoritative. The author had to be vetted by a publishing house and multiple editors, right? But when you read something online, it may have been written or posted by anybody. This means that you have to seriously evaluate the authority of the information you're reading. Pay attention to who was writing what you're reading – can you identify the author? What are their credentials?
- Second, in the print world, texts may include pictures, graphics, or other visual elements to supplement the author's writing. But in the digital realm, this supplementary material might also include hyperlinks, audio, and video, as well. This will fundamentally change the reading experience for you because online reading can be interactive in a way that a print book can't. An online environment allows you to work and play with content rather than passively absorb it.
- Finally, when you read in print, you generally read sequentially, from the first word to the last. Maybe you'll flip to an index or refer to a footnote, but otherwise the way you read is fairly consistent and straightforward. Online, however, you can be led quickly into an entirely new area of reading by clicking on links or related content. Have you ever been studying for class and fall down a Wikipedia rabbit hole while looking for unfamiliar terms? You might have started by investigating the French Revolution, but half an hour later you find yourself reading about the experimental jazz scene in 1970s New York. You can't really do that with a book.

The Why, What, How of Reading Comprehension

Now that you've heard about how reading online differs from reading print, you should know that this has some really practical consequences for reading comprehension – how to understand and apply what you're reading. Improving your online reading comprehension will save you time and frustration when you work on your assignments. You'll be able to understand your course subject matter better, and your performance on your quizzes and exams will improve.

Consider the "why, what, and how" of reading comprehension:

1. **Why?** *Why am I being asked to read this passage?* In other words, what are the instructions my professor has given me?
2. **What?** *What am I supposed to get out of this passage?* That is, what are the main concerns, questions, and points of the text? What do you need to remember for class?
3. **How?** *How will I remember what I just read?* In most cases, this means taking notes and defining key terms.

When you keep the "why, what and how" of reading comprehension in the forefront of your mind while reading, your understanding of the material will improve drastically. It will only take a few minutes but it will not only help you remember what you've read, but it will also help you structure any notes that you might want to take.

Purpose Of Academic Reading

Casual reading across genres, from books and magazines to newspapers and blogs, is something students should be encouraged to do in their free time because it can be both educational and fun. In college, however, instructors generally expect students to read resources that have particular value in the context of a course. Why is academic reading beneficial?

- **Information comes from reputable sources**: Web sites and blogs can be a source of insight and information, but not all are useful as academic resources. They may be written by people or companies whose main purpose is to share an opinion or sell you something. Academic sources such as textbooks and scholarly journal articles, on the other hand, are usually written by experts in the field and have to pass stringent peer review requirements in order to get published.
- **Learn how to form arguments**: In most college classes except for creating writing, when instructors ask you to write a paper, they expect it to be argumentative in style. This means that the goal of the paper is to research a topic and develop an argument about it using evidence and facts to support your position. Since many college reading assignments (especially journal articles) are written in a similar style, you'll gain experience studying their strategies and learning to emulate them.
- **Exposure to different viewpoints**: One purpose of assigned academic readings is to give students exposure to different viewpoints and ideas. For example, in an ethics class, you might be asked to read a series of articles written by medical professionals and religious leaders who are pro-life or pro-choice and consider the validity of their arguments. Such experience can help you wrestle with ideas and beliefs in new ways and develop a better understanding of how others' views differ from your own.

Active Learning When Reading

Many instructors conduct their classes mainly through lectures. The lecture remains the most pervasive teaching format across the field of higher education. One reason is that the lecture is an efficient way for the instructor to control the content, organization, and pace of a presentation, particularly in a large group. However, there are drawbacks to this "information-transfer" approach, where the instructor does all the talking and the students quietly listen: student have a hard time paying attention from start to finish; the mind wanders. Also, current cognitive science research shows that adult learners need an opportunity to practice newfound skills and newly introduced content. Lectures can set the stage for that interaction or practice, but lectures alone don't foster student mastery. While instructors typically speak 100–200 words per minute, students hear only 50–100 of them. Moreover, studies show that students retain 70 percent of what they hear during the first ten minutes of class and only 20 percent of what they hear during the last ten minutes of class.

Thus it is especially important for students in lecture-based courses to engage in active learning outside of the classroom. But it's also true for other kinds of college courses—including the ones that have active learning opportunities in class. Why? Because college students spend more time working (and learning) independently and less time in the classroom with the instructor and peers. Also, much of one's coursework consists of reading and writing assignments. How can these learning activities be active? The following are very effective strategies to help you be more engaged with, and get more out of, the learning you do outside the classroom:

- **Write in your books**: You can underline and circle key terms, or write questions and comments in the margins of your books. The writing serves as a visual aid for studying and makes it easier for you to remember what you've read or what you'd like to discuss in class. If you are borrowing a book or want to keep it unmarked so you can resell it later, try writing key words and notes on Post-its and sticking them on the relevant pages.
- **Annotate a text**: Annotations typically mean writing a brief summary of a text and recording the works-cited information (title, author, publisher, etc.). This is a great way to "digest" and evaluate the sources you're collecting for a research paper, but it's also invaluable for shorter assignments and texts, since it requires you to actively think and write about what you read.

The activity, below, will give you practice annotating texts.

- **Create mind maps**: Mind maps are effective visual tools for students, as they highlight the main points of readings or lessons. Think of a mind map as an outline with more graphics than words. For example, if a student were reading an article about America's First Ladies, she might write, "First Ladies" in a large circle in the center of a piece of paper. Connected to the middle circle would be lines or arrows leading to smaller circles with visual representations of the women discussed in the article. Then, these circles might branch out to even smaller circles containing the attributes of each of these women.

The following video discusses the process of creating mind maps further and shows how they can be a helpful strategy for active reading engagement:

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

Video 3.1.1

Video: How to Use a Mind Map by Two-Point-Four.*Rights Reserved.* Standard YouTube license.

In addition to the strategies described above, the following are additional ways to engage in active reading and learning:

- Work when you are fully awake, and give yourself enough time to read a text more than once.
- Read with a pen or highlighter in hand, and underline or highlight significant ideas as you read (but only the significant ideas--overhighlighting can be counter-productive).
- Interact with the ideas in the margins (summarize ideas; ask questions; paraphrase difficult sentences; make personal connections; answer questions asked earlier; challenge the author; etc.).
- 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**? (There's often more than one 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? (There's often more than one organizational form.)
  - What is the author's **TONE**? (What are the emotions behind the words? 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.

Planning and Managing Your Reading for Optimal Comprehension

Your college courses will sharpen both your reading and your writing skills. Most of your writing assignments—from brief response papers to in-depth research projects—will depend on your understanding of course reading assignments or related readings you do on your own. And it is difficult, if not impossible, to write effectively about a text that you have not understood. Even when you do understand the reading, it can be hard to write about it if you do not feel personally engaged with the ideas discussed.

This section discusses strategies you can use to get the most out of your college reading assignments. These strategies fall into three broad categories:

1. **Planning strategies** to help you manage your reading assignments.
2. **Comprehension strategies** to help you understand the material.
3. **Active reading strategies** to take your understanding to a higher and deeper level.

Planning Your Reading

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

Managing Your Reading Time

You will learn more detailed strategies for time management in Section 1.4, but for now, focus on setting aside enough time for reading and breaking your assignments into manageable chunks. If you are assigned a seventy-page chapter to read for next week's class, try not to wait until the night before to get started. Give yourself at least a few days and tackle one section at a time.

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

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

Tip:

College instructors often set aside reserve readings for a particular course. These consist of articles, book chapters, or other texts that are not part of the primary course textbook. Copies of reserve readings are available through the university library, in print, or online. When you are assigned a reserve reading, download it ahead of time (and let your instructor know if you have trouble accessing it). Skim through it to get a rough idea of how much time you will need to read the assignment in full.

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Setting a Purpose

The other key component of planning is setting a purpose. Knowing what you want to get out of a reading assignment helps you determine how to approach it and how much time to spend on it. This helps you stay focused, especially when you are tired and would rather relax.

Sometimes your purpose is simple. You might just need to understand the reading material well enough to discuss it intelligently in class the next day. However, your purpose will often go beyond that. For instance, you might also read to compare two texts, to formulate a personal response to a text, or to gather ideas for future research. Here are some questions to ask to help determine your purpose:

- **How did my instructor frame the assignment?** Often your instructor will tell you what they expect you to get out of the reading:
  - Read Chapter 2 and come to class prepared to discuss current teaching practices in elementary math.
  - Read these two articles and compare Smith's and Jones's perspectives on the 2010 health care reform bill.
  - Read Chapter 5 and think about how you could apply these guidelines to running your own business.
- **How deeply do I need to understand the reading?** If you are majoring in computer science and you are assigned to read Chapter 1, "Introduction to Computer Science," it is safe to assume the chapter presents fundamental concepts that you will be expected to master. However, for some reading assignments, you may be expected to form a general understanding but not necessarily master the content. Again, pay attention to how your instructor presents the assignment.
- **How does this assignment relate to other course readings or to concepts discussed in class?** Your instructor may make some of these connections explicitly, but if not, try to draw connections on your own. (Needless to say, it helps to take detailed notes-- when in class and when you read.)
- **How might I use this text again in the future?** If you are assigned to read about a topic that has always interested you, your reading assignment might help you develop ideas for a future research paper. Some reading assignments provide valuable tips or summaries worth bookmarking for future reference. Think about what you can take from the reading that will stay with you.

Improving Your Comprehension

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

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

Responding, Not Reacting, to Texts

As stated earlier in this chapter, actively responding to difficult texts, posing questions, and analyzing ideas presented in them is the key to successful reading. The goal of an active reader is to engage in a conversation with the text that he or she is reading. In order to fulfill this goal, it is important to understand the difference between reacting to the text and responding to it.

Reacting to a text is often done on an emotional—rather than on an intellectual—level. It is often quick and shallow. For example, if we encounter a text that advances arguments with which we strongly disagree, it is natural to dismiss those ideas out of hand as flawed and unworthy of our attention. Doing so would be reacting to the text based only on emotions and on our pre-determined opinions about its arguments. It is easy to see that reacting in this way does not take the reader any closer to understanding the text. A wall of disagreement that existed between the reader and the text before the reading continues to exist after the reading.

Responding to a text, on the other hand, requires a careful study of the ideas presented and the arguments advanced in it. Critical readers who possess this skill are not willing to simply reject or accept the arguments presented in the text after the first reading right away. To continue with our example from the preceding paragraph, a reader who responds to a controversial text rather than reacting to it might apply several of the following strategies before forming and expressing an opinion about that text.

Writing in the Reading Process

If you want to become a critical reader, you need to get into the habit of writing as you read. You also need to understand that complex texts often require multiple close readings. During the second and any subsequent readings, however, you will need to write, and write a lot. The following are some critical reading and writing techniques which active readers employ as they work to create meanings from texts they read.

Overall Strategies

- Read the text several times, taking notes, asking questions, and underlining key places. Look for “starring sentences,” or those phrases or passages that use language in creative, memorable ways to underline key points.
- Study why the author of the text advances ideas, arguments, and convictions, so different from the reader’s own. For example, is the text’s author advancing an agenda of some social, political, religious, or economic group of which he or she is a member?
- Study the purpose and the intended audience of the text.
- Study the history of the argument presented in the text as much as possible. For example, modern texts on highly controversial issues such as the death penalty, abortion, or euthanasia often use past events, court cases, and other evidence to advance their claims. Knowing the history of the problem will help you to construct a more comprehensive meaning of a difficult text.
- Study the social, political, and intellectual context in which the text was written. Good writers use social conditions to advance controversial ideas. Compare the context in which the text was written to the one in which it is read. For example, have social conditions changed, thus invalidating the argument or making it stronger?
- Consider the author’s (and your own) previous knowledge of the issue at the center of the text and your experiences with it. How might such knowledge or experience have influenced your reception of the argument?

Taking all these steps will help you to move away from simply reacting to a text and towards constructing an informed and critical response to it

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Reading Responses

Writing students are often asked to write one or two page exploratory responses to readings, but they are not always clear on the purpose of these responses and on how to approach writing them. By writing reading responses, you are continuing the important work of critical reading, which you began when you underlined interesting passages and took notes on the margins. You are extending the meaning of the text by creating your own commentary to it and perhaps even branching off into creating your own argument inspired by your reading. Your teacher may give you a writing prompt or ask you to come up with your own topic for a response. In either case, realize that reading responses are supposed to be exploratory, designed to help you delve deeper into

the text you are reading than note-taking, or underlining, will allow.

When writing extended responses to the reading, it is important to keep one thing in mind, and that is the purpose of writing a response. The purpose of these exploratory responses, which are often rather informal, is not to produce a complete argument, (with an introduction, thesis, body, and conclusion). It is not to impress your classmates and your teacher with “big” words and complex sentences. On the contrary, it is to help **you** understand the text you are working with, at a deeper level. The verb “explore” means to investigate something by looking at it more closely. Investigators get leads, some of which are fruitful and useful and some of which are dead-ends. As you investigate and create the meaning of the text you are working with, do not be afraid to take different directions with your reading response. In fact, it is important to resist the urge to make conclusions or think that you have found out everything about your reading. When it comes to exploratory reading responses, a lack of closure and the presence of more leads at the end of the piece is usually a good thing. Remember to always check with your teacher for standards and the format of reading responses.

Try the following guidelines to write a successful response to a reading:

- Remember your goal—exploration. The purpose of writing a response is to construct the meaning of a difficult text. It is not to get the job done as quickly as possible and in as few words as possible.
- As you write, “talk back to the text.” Make comments, ask questions, and elaborate on complex thoughts. This part of the writing becomes much easier if, prior to writing your response, you had read the assignment with a pen in hand and marked important places in the reading.
- If your teacher provides a response prompt, make sure you understand it. Then try to answer the questions in the prompt to the best of your ability. While you are doing that, do not be afraid of bringing in related texts, examples, or experiences. Active reading is about making connections, which will help the reader understand the text better.
- While your primary goal is exploration and questioning, make sure that others can understand your response. While it is OK to be informal in your response, make every effort to write in clear, error-free language.
- Involve your audience in the discussion of the reading by asking questions, expressing opinions, and connecting to responses made by others.

Talk about the Text

In addition to talking about the readings in class, talk with classmates, or a tutor, outside of class. This can help you clarify and deepen your understanding of the text.

Get into the habit of composing extended responses to readings. Writing students are often asked to write one or two-page exploratory responses to readings, but they are not always clear on the purpose of these responses and on how to approach writing them. By writing reading responses, you are continuing the important activities of critical reading, which you began when you compiled notes on the salient points of the text you are analyzing. You are extending the meaning of the text by creating your own commentary to it and perhaps even branching off into creating your own argument inspired by your reading. Your teacher may give you a writing prompt, or ask you to come up with your own topic for a response. In either case, realize that reading responses are supposed to be exploratory; they are designed to help you delve deeper into the text you are reading than mere note-taking or underlining will allow. Sometimes, parts of your reading responses may wind up in an essay you write.

Monitoring Your Comprehension

Finding the main idea and paying attention to text features as you read will help you figure out what you know. Just as important, however, is being able to figure out what you do not know and developing a strategy to deal with it.

Textbooks often include comprehension questions in the margins or at the end of a section or chapter. As you read, stop occasionally to answer these questions, on paper or, in your head. Use the questions and your answers to identify sections you may need to reread, read more carefully, or ask your instructor about later.

Even when a text does not have built-in comprehension features, you can actively monitor your own comprehension. Try these strategies, adapting them as needed to suit different kinds of texts:

1. **Summarize.** At the end of each section, pause to summarize -- in your own words -- the main points in a few sentences. If you have trouble doing so, revisit that section.
2. **Ask and answer questions.** When you begin reading a section, try to identify two to three questions you should be able to

answer after you finish it. Write down your questions and use them to test yourself on the reading. If you cannot answer a question, try to determine why. Is the answer buried in that section of reading but just not coming across to you? Or do you expect to find the answer in another part of the reading?

3. **Do not read in a vacuum.** Look for opportunities to discuss the reading with your classmates. Many instructors set up online discussion forums or blogs specifically for that purpose. Participating in these discussions can help you determine whether your understanding of the main points is the same as your peers'.

These discussions can also serve as a reality check. If everyone in the class struggled with the reading, it may be exceptionally challenging. If it was a breeze for everyone but you, you could seek out your instructor for help.

Exercise 1

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

1. Summarize the main points of the text in two/ three sentences.
2. Write down two or three questions about the text that you can bring up during class discussion.

TIP

Students are often reluctant to seek help. They sometimes feel that doing that marks them as slow, weak, or demanding. The truth is, every learner occasionally struggles. If you are sincerely trying to keep up with the course reading but feel like you are in over your head, seek out help. Speak up in class, schedule a meeting with your instructor, or visit your university learning center for assistance.

Deal with the problem as early in the semester as you can. Instructors respect students who are proactive about their own learning. Most instructors will work hard to help students who make the effort to help themselves.

Contributors

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3.2: Critical Reading and Rhetorical Context

Reading and Rhetorical Context

We have looked at the use of rhetoric from the viewpoint of a writer. Consider how the same elements hold true from the viewpoint as a reader.

As a reader, pay attention to these factors that shaped the document. Consider:

- What do I know about the **author**, just by reading this text? How does the author's experience or education shape the reading?
- What do I know about the **goals** for this work, just by reading this text? How do these goals influence what actually appears in the text?
- What do I know about the **intended audience** for this work? Am I a member of that intended audience?

In the following video, see how reading can literally "change your brain" to help with learning:

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

Video 3.2.1

Reading Can Change Your Brain! Authored by: Seeker. *All Rights Reserved. Standard YouTube license.*

Critical Reading

Life presents us with a variety of reading situations, which demand different reading strategies and techniques. Sometimes, it is important to be as efficient as possible and read purely for information or "the main point." At other times, it is important to just "let go" and turn the pages reading a good story although this sometimes means not thinking deeply about the story you are reading. At the heart of writing and research, however, lies the kind of reading known as critical reading. The critical examination of sources is what makes their use in research possible and what allows writers to create rhetorically effective and engaging texts.

Critical readers are able to interact with the texts they read through carefully listening, writing, conversation, and questioning. They do not sit back and wait for the meaning of a text to come to them; instead, they work hard in order to create such meaning. Critical readers are not made overnight. Becoming a critical reader takes a lot of practice and patience. Depending on your current reading philosophy and experiences with reading, becoming a critical reader may require a significant change in your whole understanding of the reading process. The trade-off is worth it, however. By becoming a more critical and active reader, you will also become a better researcher and a better writer. Last but not least, you will enjoy reading and writing a whole lot more because you will become actively engaged in both.

Critical reading, then, is a two-way process. As reader, you are not a consumer of words, waiting patiently for ideas from the printed page or a web-site to fill your head and make you smarter. Instead, as a critical reader, you will interact with what you read, asking questions of the author, testing every assertion, fact, or idea, and extending the text by adding your own understanding of the subject and your own personal experiences.

The idea behind the rhetorical theory of reading is that when we read, we not only take in ideas, information, and facts, but in

the process we also “update our view of the world.” This is what it means to be a monitoring citizen. You cannot force someone to update his or her worldview; therefore, the purpose of writing is persuasion, and the purpose of reading is to be persuaded. Persuasion is possible only when the reader is actively engaged with the text and understands that much more than simple retrieval of information is at stake when reading.

Key features of the critical approach to reading:

- No text, however skillfully written or authoritative, contains its own, pre-determined meaning. Audiences bring their education, situated knowledge, and experience to bear on texts in order to better understand their meanings.
- Readers must work hard to create meaning from every text. All complex texts contain surface meaning and subtext. Often, readers have to think of the bigger picture in making sense of how a subject can influence broader culture.
- Critical readers interact with the texts that they read by questioning them, responding to them, and expanding them, usually in writing.
- Critical readers actively search for related texts to place these works in conversation with each other to advance important ideas. Consider how subjects from your other courses and experiences connect to the sources you are reading.

Advice for Critical Readers

The first key to being a critical and active reader is to find something in the piece that interests, bothers, encourages, or just confuses you. Use this to drive your analysis.

- Reading something once is never enough, so reading it quickly before class just won’t cut it. Read it once to get your brain comfortable with the work; then read it again and actually try to understand what’s going on in it.
- Annotate the text while you read. Annotation is a key reading-writing activity. Writing while you read allows you to have a conversation with the text. It keeps your brain active while you read, it clarifies questions that you might want to bring to class, and it gives you a place to start your writing because you've already thought about it. We cannot overstate the importance of annotation while reading. There are a number of ways to annotate, and strategies for that are explained below.
- Ask questions. It seems like a simple suggestion, but if you never ask questions you’ll never get any answers. So, while you’re reading, think of questions and just write them down on a piece of paper lest you forget them.

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:

- Read to understand, by using text coding
- Examine arguments
- Clarify thinking
- Cultivate “habits of mind”

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 (if your copy of the text is from the library or rented). As you make connections and ask questions in response to what you read, 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

Shorthand	Meaning
L	Learned something new
!	Big idea surfaced
*	Interesting or important fact
?	Dig deeper
✓	Agree
≠	Disagree

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

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

Video 3.2.1

Critical Thinking: Spectrum of Authority. Authored by: UBC Learn. *All Rights Reserved. Standard YouTube license.*

3. Clarify Thinking

When you use critical thinking to evaluate information, you need to clarify your thinking to yourself and, maybe, to others. Doing this well is mainly a process of asking and answering probing questions, such as the logic questions discussed earlier in this chapter. 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 adopted about the principles 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.

Contributors

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3.3: Reading Strategies - Previewing

Pre-reading Strategies

The few minutes you spend preparing BEFORE reading any difficult material can motivate you to read it, as well as increase your ability to understand and remember what you read. Think about it like this: when you are driving to a new place, you would probably look at a map first (or at least turn on your GPS) so you don't waste time getting lost. Similarly, when you approach a new academic reading, it's best to use the 4P's (***p**urpose, **p**review, **p**rior knowledge, and **p**redict)* so you don't struggle as much to figure out what the authors want to say or how they plan to say it. Preparing to read can also help you estimate how long you'll take to read so you can plan your time more efficiently.

Reading Strategy: Previewing

What It Is

Previewing is a strategy that readers use to recall prior knowledge and set a purpose for reading. It calls for readers to skim a text before reading, looking for various features and information that will help as they return to read it in detail later.

Why Use It

According to research, previewing a text can improve comprehension (Graves, Cooke, & LaBerge, 1983, cited in Paris et al., 1991).

Previewing a text helps readers prepare for what they are about to read and set a purpose for reading.

The **genre** determines the reader's methods for previewing:

- Readers preview nonfiction to find out what they know about the subject and what they want to find out. It also helps them understand how an author has organized information.
- Readers preview biographies to determine something about the person in the biography, the time period, and some possible places and events in the life of the person.
- Readers preview fiction to determine characters, setting, and plot. They also preview to make predictions about story's problems and solutions.

When To Use It

Previewing is a strategy readers use before and during reading.

How To Use It

When readers preview a text before they read, they first ask themselves whether the text is fiction or nonfiction.

- If the text is fiction or biography, readers look at the title, chapter headings, introductory notes, and illustrations for a better understanding of the content and possible settings or events.
- If the text is nonfiction, readers look at text features and illustrations (and their captions) to determine subject matter and to recall prior knowledge, to decide what they know about the subject. Previewing also helps readers figure out what they don't know and what they want to find out.

How to Preview

Figure: CC BY-NC

Previewing a text is similar to watching a movie preview.

Think of previewing a text as similar to watching a movie trailer. A successful preview for either a movie or a reading experience will capture what the overall work is going to be about, generally what expectations the audience can have of the experience to come, how the piece is structured, and what kinds of patterns will emerge.

Previewing engages your prior experience and asks you to think about what you already know about this subject matter, or this author, or this publication. Then anticipate what new information might be ahead of you when you return to read this text more closely.

Specific Previewing Strategies

KWL+

KWL+ is a simple strategy that is both a reading-writing strategy, as well as an overall structure for research papers. **K** stands for "What I **K**now". **W** stands for "What I **W**ant to Know." **L** stands for "What I **L**earned." **+** stands for "What I Still (**+**) Want to Know.

Exercise 3.3.1

After a brief review of the topic you will be reading about, on a piece of paper, create a table like the one below with the topic at the top of the page. Write down what you already know about the topic in the **K** column and what you want to learn in the **W** column. Use the "K" column as an "into the reading" activity and the "W" column as a guide for what you will look for as you read about the topic. After you have done your research or reading, write down what you learned in the **"L"** column. Then -- at the end of the research process or when you are done reading -- write down what you still want to know in the **"+"** column. This becomes a recursive process (routine) in which the "+" can then become the base for the next round of your inquiry.

Topic: _____

K (What I Know)	**W** (What I Want to Know)	**L** (What I Learned)	**+** (What I Still Want to Know)

Answer available at the end of this section.

The 4 "P"s: Purpose, Preview, Prior Knowledge, Predict

1. *Purpose:* Determining your reading goals can help motivate you to read. It will also determine how carefully you need to read and what reading strategies you can use.

- Are you looking for general main ideas or specific details, or both?
- Are you going to discuss what you read in class, take a test, use what you read in an essay? Or are you just reading for pleasure?
- How does this reading task tie into the unit or the whole course?

2. *Preview:* Spend a few minutes looking at visual clues to the author's central idea, supporting points, and organization of ideas. Depending on the type of reading, look at some, or all, of the following elements:

- Title
- Introductory information about the author and/or selection
- First and last paragraphs
- First sentence of body paragraphs
- Headings and subheadings
- *Italics*, **bold print**, numbers, symbols
- Comprehension questions or, other after-reading assignment

3. Prior Knowledge: What do you already know about this topic? Using your own background knowledge and experiences can help stimulate your interest and increase your comprehension.

4. Predict: After previewing a text, a reader can begin to make guesses about what the writer wants to say. These *predictions* are important in motivating you and keep you focused while reading.

Use the SQ3R Strategy

One strategy you can use to become a more active, engaged reader is the SQ3R strategy, a step-by-step process to follow before, during, and after reading. You may already be using some variation of it. In essence, the process works like this:

1. **Survey** the text in advance.

2. Form **questions** before you start reading.

3. **Read** the text.

4. **Recite** and/or **record** important points during and after reading.

5. **Review** and **reflect** on the text after you read.

Before reading, survey -- or preview -- the text. As noted earlier, reading introductory paragraphs and headings can help you figure out the text's main point and identify what important topics will be covered. However, surveying does not stop there. Look over sidebars, photographs, and any other text or graphic features that catch your eye. Skim a few paragraphs. Preview any boldfaced or italicized vocabulary terms. This will help you form a first impression of the material.

Next, start brainstorming questions about the text. What do you expect to learn from the reading? You may find that some questions come to mind immediately based on your initial survey or based on previous readings and class discussions. If not, try using headings and subheadings in the text to formulate questions. For instance, if one heading i your textbook reads "Medicare and Medicaid," you might ask yourself:

- When was Medicare and Medicaid legislation enacted? Why?
- What are the major differences between these two programs?

Although some of your questions may be simple factual questions, try to come up with a few that are ore open-ended. Asking in-depth questions will help you stay more engaged as you read.

The next step is simple: read. As you read, notice whether your first impressions of the text were correct. Are the author's main points and overall approach about the same as what you predicted--or does the text contain a few surprises? Also, look for answers to your earlier questions and begin forming new questions. Continue to revise your impressions and questions as you read.

While you are reading, pause occasionally to record/recite important points. It is best to do this at the end of each section or where there is an obvious shift in the writer's train of thought. Put the book aside for a moment and recite aloud the main points of the section or any important answers you found there. You might also record ideas by jotting down a few brief notes in addition to, or instead of, reciting aloud. Either way, the physical act of articulating information makes you more likely to remember it.

After you have completed the reading, take some time to review the material more thoroughly. If the textbook includes review questions or your instructor has provided a study guide, use these tools to guide your review. You will want to record information in a more detailed format than you did during reading (which would be an outline or a list).

As you review the material, reflect on what you learned. Did anything surprise you, upset you, or make you think? Did you find yourself strongly agree or disagreeing with any points in the text? What topics would you like to explore further? Jot down your reflections in your notes. (Instructors sometimes require students to write brief response papers or maintain a reading journal. Use these assignments to help you reflect on what you read.)

The video below explains a little more about the SQ3R strategy.

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

Video 3.3.1

Exercise 3.3.1

Choose another text that you have been assigned to read for a class. Use the SQ3R process to complete the reading. (Keep in mind that you may need to spread the reading over more than one sesion, especially if the text is long.)

Be sure to complete all the steps involved. Then, reflect o n how helpful you found this process. On a scale of one to ten, how useful did you find it? How does it compare with other study techniques you have used?

Use Other Active Reading Strategies

The SQ3R process encompasses a number of valuable active reading strategies: previewing a text, making predictions, asking and answering quesitons, and summarizing. You can use the following additional strategies to further deepen your understanding of what you read.

- **Connect what you read to what you already know.** Look for ways the reading supports, extends, or challenges concepts you have learned elsewhere.
- **Relate the reading to your own life.** What statements, people, or situations relate to your personal experiences?
- **Visualize.** For both fiction and nonfiction texts, try to picture what is described. Visualizing is especially helpful when you are readinga narrative text, such as a novel or a historical account, or when you read expository texts that describes a process,

such as how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- **Pay attention to graphics a well as text**. Photographs, diagrams, flow charts, tables, and other graphics can help make abstract ideas more concrete and understandable.
- **Understand the text in context.** Understanding context means thinking about who wrote the text, when and where it was written, the author's purpose in writing it, and what assumptions or agendas influenced the author's ideas. For instance, two writers address the subject of health care reform, but if one article is an opinion piece and one is a news story, the rhetorical context is different.
- **Plan to talk or write about what you read.** Jot down a few questions or comments in your notebook so you can bring them up in class. (This also gives you a source of topic ideas for papers and presentations later in the semester.) Discuss the reading on a class discussion board or blog about it.

Additional Strategies

Following are some strategies you can use to enhance your reading even further:

- **Pace yourself.** Figure out how much time you have to complete the assignment. Divide the assignment into smaller blocks rather than trying to read the entire assignment in one sitting. If you have a week to do the assignment, for example, divide the work into five daily blocks, not seven; that way you won't be behind if something comes up to prevent you from doing your work on a given day. If everything works out on schedule, you'll end up with an extra day for review.
- **Schedule your reading.** Set aside blocks of time, preferably at the time of the day when you are most alert, to do your reading assignments. Don't just leave them for the end of the day after completing written and other assignments.
- **Get yourself in the right space.** Choose to read in a quiet, well-lit space. Your chair should be comfortable but provide good support. Libraries were designed for reading—they should be your first option! Don't use your bed for reading textbooks; since the time you were read bedtime stories, you have probably associated reading in bed with preparation for sleeping. The combination of the cozy bed, comforting memories, and dry text is sure to invite some shut-eye!
- **Avoid distractions.** Active reading takes place in your short-term memory. Every time you move from task to task, you have to "reboot" your short-term memory and you lose the continuity of active reading. Multitasking—listening to music or texting on your cell phone while you read—will cause you to lose your place and force you to start over again. Every time you lose focus, you cut your effectiveness and increase the amount of time you need to complete the assignment.
- **Avoid reading fatigue.** Work for about fifty minutes, and then give yourself a break for five to ten minutes. Put down the book, walk around, get a snack, stretch, or do some deep knee bends. Short physical activity will do wonders to help you feel refreshed.
- **Read your most difficult assignments early** in your reading time, when you are freshest.
- **Make your reading interesting.** Try connecting the material you are reading with your class lectures or with other chapters. Ask yourself where you disagree with the author. Approach finding answers to your questions like an investigative reporter. Carry on a mental conversation with the author.
- **Highlight** your reading material. Most readers tend to highlight too much, hiding key ideas in a sea of yellow lines, making it difficult to pick out the main points when it is time to review. When it comes to highlighting, less is more. Think critically before you highlight. Your choices will have a big impact on what you study and learn for the course. Make it your objective to highlight no more than 15-25% of what you read. Use highlighting after you have read a section to note the most important points, key terms, and concepts. Y**ou can't know what the most important thing is unless you've read the whole section, so don't highlight as you read.**
- **Annotate** your reading material. Marking up your book may go against what you were told in high school when the school owned the books and expected to use them year after year. In college, *you* bought the book. Make it truly yours. Although some students may tell you that you can get more cash by selling a used book that is not marked up, this should *not* be a concern at this time—that's not nearly as important as understanding the reading and doing well in the class!

  The purpose of marking your textbook is to make it your personal studying assistant with the key ideas called out in the text. Use your pencil also to make annotations in the margin. Use a symbol like an exclamation mark (*!*) or an asterisk (*) to mark an idea that is particularly important. Use a question mark (*?*) to indicate something you don't understand or are unclear about. Box new words, then write a short definition in the margin. Use "TQ" (for "test question") or some other shorthand or symbol to signal key things that may appear in test or quiz questions. Write personal notes on items where you disagree with the author. Don't feel you have to use the symbols listed here; create your own if you want, but be consistent. Your notes won't help you if the first question you later have is "I wonder what I meant by that?"

  Watch the following video on annotating texts:

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

Video 3.3.1

Video: Annotate It! Authored by: Janene Davison. *All Rights Reserved.* Standard YouTube license.

- **Get to Know the Conventions.** Academic texts, like scientific studies and journal articles, may have sections that are new to you. If you're not sure what an "abstract" is, research it online or ask your instructor. Understanding the meaning and purpose of such conventions is not only helpful for reading comprehension but for writing, too.
- **Look up and Keep Track of Unfamiliar Terms and Phrases.** Have a good college dictionary such as Merriam-Webster handy (or find it online) when you read complex academic texts, so you can look up the meaning of unfamiliar words and terms. Many textbooks also contain glossaries or "key terms" sections at the ends of chapters or the end of the book. Many books available on an e-reader have definitions already embedded if you highlight the unknown word. If you can't find the words you're looking for in a standard dictionary, you may need one specially written for a particular discipline. For example, a medical dictionary would be a good resource for a course in anatomy and physiology. If you circle or underline terms and phrases that appear repeatedly, you'll have a visual reminder to review and learn them. Repetition helps to lock in these new words and to get their meaning into long-term memory, so the more you review them, the more you'll understand and feel comfortable using them.
- **Make Flashcards.** If you are studying certain words for a test, or you know that certain phrases will be used frequently in a course or field, try making flashcards for review. For each key term, write the word on one side of an index card and the definition on the other. Drill yourself, and then ask your friends to help quiz you. Developing a strong vocabulary is similar to most hobbies and activities. Even experts in a field continue to encounter and adopt new words.

Contributors

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Answers

Exercise 3.3.1

Topic: _____

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3.4 Annotation Basics

Annotating Texts

What is annotation?

Annotation can be:

- A systematic summary of the text that you create within the document
- A key tool for close reading that helps you uncover patterns, notice important words, and identify main points
- An active learning strategy that improves comprehension and retention of information

Why annotate?

- Isolate and organize important material
- Identify key concepts
- Monitor your learning as you read
- Make exam prep effective and streamlined
- Can be more efficient than creating a separate set of reading notes

How do you annotate?

Summarize key points in your own words.

- Use headers and words in bold to guide you
- Look for main ideas, arguments, and points of evidence
- Notice how the text organizes itself. Chronological order? Idea trees? Etc.

Circle key concepts and phrases

- What words would it be helpful to look-up at the end?
- What terms show up in lecture? When are different words used for similar concepts? Why?

Write brief comments and questions in the margins

- Be as specific or broad as you would like—use these questions to activate your thinking about the content
- See our handout on reading comprehension tips for some examples

Use abbreviations and symbols

- Try ? when you have a question or something you need to explore further
- Try ! When something is interesting, a connection, or otherwise worthy of note
- Try * For anything that you might use as an example or evidence when you use this information.
- Ask yourself what other system of symbols would make sense to you.

Highlight/underline

- Highlight or underline, but mindfully. Check out our resource on strategic highlighting for tips on when and how to highlight.

Use comment and highlight features built into pdfs, online/digital textbooks, or other apps and browser add-ons

- Are you using a pdf? Explore its highlight, edit, and comment functions to support your annotations
- Some browsers have add-ons or extensions that allow you to annotate web pages or web-based documents
- Does your digital or online textbook come with an annotation feature?

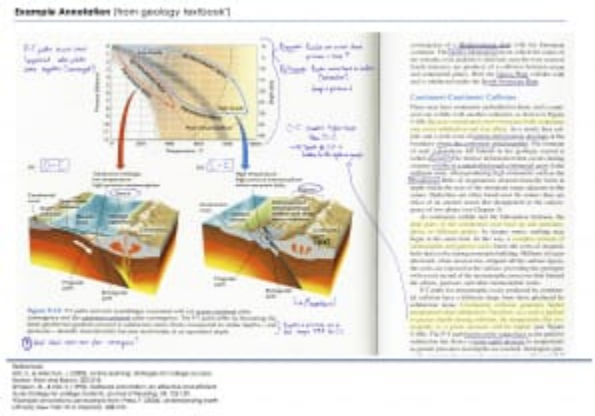
- Can your digital text be imported into a note-taking tool like OneNote, EverNote, or Google Keep? If so, you might be able to annotate texts in those apps

What are the most important takeaways?

- Annotation is about increasing your engagement with a text
- Increased engagement, where you think about and process the material then expand on your learning, is how you achieve mastery in a subject
- As you annotate a text, ask yourself: how would I explain this to a friend?
- Put things in your own words and draw connections to what you know and wonder

The table below demonstrates this process using a geography textbook excerpt (Press 2004):

Passage from Text	Too Much Writing	Not Enough	Good Balance
*The shape of metamorphic P-T paths provides insight into the manner in which these rocks are metamorphosed. In convergent margin settings, P-T paths indicate rapid subduction of rocks and sediments to sites with high pressures and relatively low temperatures. In settings where subduction leads to continental collision, rocks are pushed down to depths where pressure and temperature are both high. In both settings, the P-T paths form loops. These loops show that after the rocks experienced the maximum pressures and temperatures, they were pushed back up to shallow depths.**	Shape of P-T paths tells us about the conditions of metamorphosis: - Convergent margin settings: rocks are subducted to depths with high temperature and low pressure - Continental collision settings: rocks are subducted to depths with high temperature and high pressure In both cases the P-T paths form loops, showing that the rocks were pushed back up.	P-T paths show conditions Two settings P-T paths loop	Shape of P-T paths reveals subduction site depths, temps, pressure Settings: 1. Convergent margins: HIGH temp, LOW pressure 2. Continental collision: HIGH temp, HIGH pressure P-T paths loop in both settings



A common concern about annotating texts: It takes time!

Yes, it can, but that time isn't lost—it's invested.

Spending the time to annotate on the front end does two important things:

- It saves you time later when you're studying. Your annotated notes will help speed up exam prep, because you can review critical concepts quickly and efficiently.
- It increases the likelihood that you will retain the information after the course is completed. This is especially important when you are supplying the building blocks of your mind and future career.

One last tip: Try separating the reading and annotating processes! Quickly read through a section of the text first, then go back and annotate.

Works consulted:

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3.4: Questioning Strategies

Questioning Circles

The questioning circles are a graphical representation (a form of a Venn diagram) of three domains: You, the Text, and the World (or another text). When you create questions based on a domain, or a combination of domains, it can help you examine and think about an idea more deeply. This, in turn, can help you understand and think about your reading and help you develop your writing.

There are three levels of questions in this model:

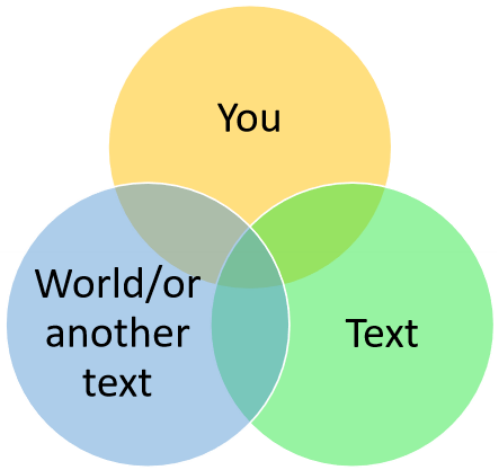
Level 1 (Clear) Questions: These are about one domain only and can only be answered with a fact.

Level 2 (Shaded) Questions: These are questions about a combination of two domains and require interpretation and an opinion by the person who answers the question.

Level 3 (Dense) Questions: These questions combine all three domains. They require interpretation, and usually there is no one right answer. Level 3 questions make great essay questions!

The following figure is a graphic representation of the domains you would ask about when creating questions: you, the text, and another world or another text. Please note that a text can be anything you "read," from a class reading assignment, to a movie, etc.

Figure 3.3.1: Questioning Circle Domains



Examples of Questioning Circle Questions

Level 1 questions can be answered with facts only.

- Level 1 question about you: Have you ever experienced xx?
- Level 1 question about the text: What was the setting in the text in Chapter x?
- Level 1 question about the world: How often does x occur in the world?

Level 2 questions combine two of the domains. They can only be answered with an opinion (an educated opinion).

- Level 2 question about you and the text: Do you think you would respond in the same way as (character) did if you were in

that situation?
- Level 2 question about you and the world: What have your experiences in the world in relation to xxx been like?
- Level 2 question about the text and the world: Are (character's) experiences in the book representative of how most people in the world experience this situation?
- Level 2 question about the text and another text: How do the characters in [novel] and [novel] react differently to similar situations?

Level 3 questions ask questions about a combination of all three domains. These questions cannot be answered definitively and generally require readers to compare ideas about issues that can't easily be answered.

Level 3 question about you, text, and the world: How do you think a person's past experiences inform how they interact with people in situations such as those in which [characters] found themselves?

Contributors

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3.5: Inferences

Inferences vs. Guessing

What is an inference? What's the difference between an inference and a guess? And what does any of this have to do with college-level reading and writing?

An inference is a conclusion you reach by applying logic to the evidence you are given. Making inferences while reading is a strategy that will help you learn, remember, and apply what you have read. When you make inferences, you are "reading between the lines". This tactic is similar to what Sherlock Holmes does when he sees that Dr. Watson has a tan and makes a conclusion about where Watson has recently traveled.

You already make inferences all of the time. For example, if you go over to a friend's house and they point at the sofa and say, "Don't sit there; Candy came over with her baby again," what could you logically conclude? First, you know there must be a reason not to sit where your friend is pointing. Further, you know that the reason to not sit there is related to the fact that Cindy just visited with her baby. You don't know what exactly happened, but you can infer enough and don't need to ask any more questions to know that you do not want to sit there.

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Other examples of inferences are when a doctor makes a diagnosis about why you are sick or when a mechanic figures out what is wrong with your car. What can you infer from the image above? Try making some inferences yourself. Imagine you witness each of the following – what can you infer about each situation?

1. You see a woman pushing a baby stroller down the street.
2. You are at a corner and see two cars stopped at an intersection. The rear car starts honking its horn.
3. You are walking down the street, and all of a sudden a dog comes running out of an opened door with its tail between its legs.

For the first example, you probably came up with something simple, such as that there was a baby in the stroller. For the second, you could infer that the first car should have started moving or was waiting too long at the corner and holding up the second car. For the third, you could reasonably guess that the dog had done something wrong and was afraid of being punished. You do not know for certain that these inferences are true.

Just like Sherlock Holmes, you would have to test your theories. If you checked 100 strollers, 99 times you would find a baby, but maybe one time you would find something else, like groceries or a small dog.

Exercise 3.5.1

Write a conclusion you could infer from the following:

1. You see a man running and frantically waving at a bus that is pulling away from a bus stop.
2. You are giving a speech in front of an audience and notice several people laughing and pointing at something on your pants.
3. Your sister comes home from spending the evening with her friends, slams the front door and runs to her room while crying.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Making Inferences from Reading Material

To make inferences from reading material, take two or more details from the reading and see if you can draw a conclusion. Remember, making an inference is not just making a guess even though the answer is not stated in the reading passage. You need to make a judgment that can be supported, just as you could reasonably infer there is a baby in a stroller, because even though you do not know for certain, it is the most likely possibility. For example, at the end of the story "The Five Orange Pips," you are not told what exactly happened to the Lone Star, but you can infer that it was wrecked in a storm based on the other details provided:

- There was a storm.
- The ship did not arrive at its next destination.
- Wreckage with the initials L.S. were seen by other sailors.

You could claim that the ship was taken by pirates, was sunk by a whale, or even that it landed on a deserted island; however, the only reasonable explanation from the facts is the same one implied by Dr. Watson: the ship was destroyed by the storm.

When you are asked to make an inference, go back over the reading and look for hints within the text, such as words that are directly related to the question. Also check for tone: are there words or phrases that indicate whether something is positive or negative? For example, if someone is referred to as being, sharp, friendly, and loyal, you would know that those are positive attributes, whereas if they were referred to as being slovenly, dull, and selfish, those are negative attributes.

In order to make reasonable inferences that help you better comprehend what you read, remember to do the following:

Understand the stated information. You don't necessarily have to identify the main ideas to make a reasonable inference. However, you do need to understand the important vocabulary and facts in the text. So ask yourself, "What do these details seem to show? Is there enough evidence to support my inference?" "*Are there any other possible ways to interpret this?*"

Use your prior knowledge of the situation and your common sense. However, do not ignore the facts in favor of your own personal opinions.

Consider the alternatives so you don't "jump to conclusions." Inferences tend to be "reasonable" when they are the result of "reasoned" thinking, not emotional reactions. When you go to a doctor for advice, he or she will think of different possible diagnoses before settling on the one that is most likely, given your symptoms. If the doctor jumped too quickly to one conclusion, he might give you the wrong treatment. If, as a reader, you jump too quickly to one interpretation of the text, you may not understand what the writer intended to convey.

Example: Imagine that it is a sunny day and you decide to go see a movie. After the movie is over, you step back outside and see that the sky is now cloudy and the streets and sidewalks are all wet. What can we reasonably infer happened?

If you said that it rained while you were in the theater, you're right! But what if you said that everything is wet because a water truck driving down the street was hit by a piano falling from an upper story window, causing the water truck to burst open and spill water all? This is a very unlikely scenario.

Questioning/responding (after you read): After you read a text, or part of a book, you will often be asked to respond to

questions about the text. Just as you did when you annotated, you will often be asked to write down main ideas from the text as well as your own personal reactions to the text. **Hint: Read these questions BEFORE you read the text as a pre-reading exercise. This will help you build more SCHEMA (representation of a theory in the form of an outline) about the text.**

Exercise 3.5.2

Read the following passage, and then determine what you can infer from the passage.

Hybrid cars are good for the environment, but they may not perform as well as cars that run only on gasoline. The Toyota Prius gets great gas mileage and has low emissions, making it a good "green" option. However, many people think that it is unattractive. The Prius also cannot accelerate as quickly as other models and cannot hold as many passengers as larger gas-fueled SUVs. Although they save money on fuel, hybrid cars cost more up front than gas-fueled cars. A new hybrid car can cost almost $3,500 more than the same car configured to run just on gasoline.

Which of the following can you infer from the passage?

1. Hybrid cars are more dangerous than other options.
2. Toyota is making a lot of money from the Prius.
3. Cars that use gasoline are going to destroy the environment.
4. Hybrid cars may not be the best choice for everyone.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 3.5.3

Read the following passage, and then determine what you can infer from the passage.

Redwood trees are rare. They are found only on the coastal slopes of Northern California and Oregon, and in China. Redwoods were thought to be extinct in China, but they were rediscovered by a Chinese forester in 1948. These trees can grow hundreds of feet high and live to be thousands of years old. They are endangered due to logging, pollution, and global warming, which is reducing the amount of fog on the coast. Redwoods get their water from the fog.

Which of the following can you infer from the passage:

1. The Chinese logged the Redwoods almost into extinction.
2. Redwood trees will continue to grow taller throughout their whole lives.
3. Using non-recyclable products will kill Redwood trees.
4. Redwoods can only grow in places that get a lot of fog.

Paragraph 2:

Shannelle is a very good baker. Whenever there is a bake sale to raise money for a cause, Shannelle is always asked to make cupcakes or a pie. People say that they only come to the bake sales if they know that Shannelle is making something. She always agreed to bake things because she hated to say no to anyone. One week, her oven broke and she could not bake, so she decided to go for a hike instead. Shannelle enjoyed it so much that she realized she needed to learn to make time for herself, and not just donate all of her free time to charity.

Which of the following can you infer from the passage:

1. Shannelle is a generous person.
2. Shannelle's mother did a good job teaching her how to bake.
3. The people in the community were taking advantage of Shannelle.
4. Shannelle's brother broke her oven so she would get a day off.

Building on Your Knowledge of Inferences

Previously, we covered the basics of **inferences** and **reasonable conclusions**. Now we are going to look at another strategy to help you make valid inferences: the if-then statement. To use an if-then statement, look at the information presented in the reading and see if you could rephrase it into a statement using the words "if" and "then", which establish a cause-and-effect relationship.

For example:

In the 1800s in England, laws were applied differently depending on the gender of the accused. Women could not own land or vote. Women were barred from receiving a death sentence for crimes that a man could be executed for because people thought it would be too shocking to see a woman hanged publicly. In some places, men could be fined for certain behaviors done in the presence of a woman, such as swearing or spitting, but not if those same behaviors were done only in the presence of men.

What **if-then statements** could we make based on the paragraph above? Let's go through sentence-by-sentence.

1. If we were back in England in the 1800s, then the laws would be applied differently for men and women.
2. If we were back in England in the 1800s, then women could not own land or vote.
3. If a woman committed a capital crime ("capital" meaning one that could earn a death sentence), then she would not be executed.
4. If a woman were hung, then the public would be shocked.
5. If a man swore in the presence of a woman, then he could be fined.

Broken down like this you can see how much easier it is to make logical inferences. Suppose you were asked if a woman who murdered her husband would be executed.

If-then statement #3 would tell you that the answer is "no," even though that information is not directly mentioned in the text. If you were asked if women were involved in government, you would say "no" because you know that they could not vote (#2). If you were asked if men could own real estate, you would say "yes" because #2 indicates that the fact that women could NOT own real estate was different from what men could do.

Exercise 3.5.4

Now do the same thing with the next paragraph. Write your if-then statements first, then your inferences, and then check your work below.

Many people don't realize that our sun is actually a star. Our sun seems very large because it is so close to us; however, some stars are actually much larger than our sun. Betelguese (pronounced beetle-juice), a star located in the constellation Orion, is much larger than our own sun. In fact, if it were located where our sun is located, its surface would engulf both Earth and Mars. Because other stars are so distant, they appear to be fainter, which is why we cannot see them in the daytime. Betelguese is the 8th brightest star in the night sky. To find Betelguese, first locate the constellation Orion. This star forms his left shoulder.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 3.5.5

Write an if-then statement for each sentence in the following paragraphs.

1) Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America. The population in Nicaragua, hovering at approximately 6 million, is multiethnic. Segments of the population include indigenous native tribes from the Mosquito Coast, Europeans, Africans, Asians, and people of Middle East origin. The main language is Spanish although native tribes on the eastern coast speak their native languages, such as Miskito, Sumo, and Rama, as well as English Creole. The mixture of cultural traditions has generated substantial diversity in art, cuisine, literature, and music.

2) Childhood obesity is a condition where excess body fat negatively affects a child's health or well-being. Since methods to directly determine the amount of body fat are difficult, the diagnosis of obesity is often based on the Body Mass Index (BMI). Due to the rising prevalence of obesity in children and its many adverse health effects, obesity is being recognized as a serious public health concern. The term "overweight" is often used instead of "obese" for children because it is less stigmatizing.

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Answers

Exercise 3.5.2

You will notice right away that there is nothing about car safety in the passage at all, so you can eliminate choice A. Choice B could be the answer, since the passage mentions that hybrids cost more to purchase. But is it the most reasonable conclusion?

To be sure, you need to go through all of the answers – don't just stop when you find one that looks okay. You may think that choice C is true; after all, many people want hybrid cars because emissions are harmful to the environment. Although this choice seems accurate, it does not follow from anything in the passage. Choice D could be inferred from the text. If a person had a large family, was short on money or needed a car that could accelerate quickly, then a hybrid might not be the best choice for them.

Now compare choice D with the other possible answer, choice B. Choice B might not be as good an answer because you don't know how much it costs Toyota to make the cars, and you don't know how many they sell, so you can't reasonably infer that they are making a lot of money. Choice D is the correct answer.

Exercise 3.5.4

These are just examples, but your answers should be similar to them.

If something is far away, then it will appear smaller. If something looks smaller, then it may not be smaller if it is far away.

From here, there are dozens of conclusions you could infer. For example, if you were asked why Star A appears smaller than Star B, you would know it might be because it is actually smaller. Then again, it might also appear smaller because it is farther away. The if-then statement is a useful strategy that can help you make inferences and increase your reading comprehension.

- If a star is much larger than the sun, then it could be Betelguese.
- If a star is fainter than the sun, then it cannot be seen during the day.
- If a star is the 8th brightest in the night sky, then it is Betelguese.
- If you know which constellation a star is in, then it is easier to find.

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3.6: Vocabulary

Adults learn most of their new vocabulary from reading. Therefore, to increase your vocabulary, which is a major goal for many college students, the best thing you can do is read texts that aren't too easy. Your instructor should assign readings that will stretch your reading level.

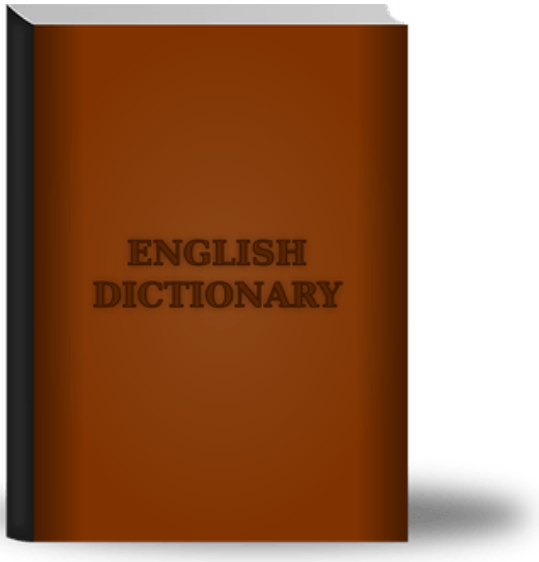

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Strategies for Dealing with Unfamiliar Words

Many subject-matter textbooks include key vocabulary and definitions at the beginning of chapters. However, in the humanities, this is not the case many times, so you need to figure out new vocabulary without that help. When you encounter new vocabulary, try to avoid going straight to the dictionary. And unless the word is really impeding your understanding of the text, just circle it and come back to it later after reading. However, if the same word repeats a couple of times, it might be a key word, so it could be prudent to go through the "Vocabulary from Context" activity before you move on with your reading. First, try to figure out the word from context. Second, try to figure out the meaning through words with similar roots. The suffix of the word will tell you the part of speech.

To summarize:

1. Context Clues
2. Understanding words through their structure (roots, prefixes, suffixes)
3. Dictionary and other reference tools

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:

1. Brief definition or restatement
2. Synonyms and antonyms
3. Examples

1) 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*.

2) 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. The word *but* sometimes signals antonyms.

3) 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 infer 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.

Exercise 3.6.1

You can use this form to help you decipher the meaning of words through context clues:

Vocabulary From Context Activity

Word #1: _____

Sentence that word appears in:

_____

What you think the word means from context: _____

What clues in the sentence tell you it might mean this?

_____

Dictionary definition of word (do not use a definition that has a form of the word in it):

_____

Were you right? _____

Re-read the sentence. Does it make more sense now? _____

If not, bring this sentence up for class or group discussion.

Exercise 3.6.2

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 very adroit on the balance beam, but Constance is rather clumsy.
2. I saw the entomologist, a scientist who studies insects, cradle the giant dung beetle in her palm.
3. Lance's comments about politics were irrelevant and 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's sage advice and made a copy of my passport.
5. His rancor, or hatred, for socializing resulted in a life of loneliness and boredom.
6. Martin was mortified, way beyond embarrassment, when his friends teamed up to shove him into the pool.
7. The petulant four-year-old had a baby sister who was, on the contrary, not grouchy at all.
8. The philosophy teacher presented the students with several conundrums, or riddles, to solve.
9. Most Americans are omnivores, people that eat both plants and animals.
10. Elena is effervescent, as excited as a cheerleader, for example, when she meets someone for the first time.

Exercise 3.6.3

On your own sheet of paper, write the name of the context clue that helps to define the underlined words.

Maggie was a precocious child to say the least. She produced brilliant watercolor paintings by the age of three. At first, her parents were flabbergasted—utterly blown away—by their daughter's ability, but soon they got used to their little painter. Her preschool teacher said that Maggie's dexterity, or ease with which she used her hands, was something she had never before seen in such a young child. Little Maggie never gloated or 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 mouths agape, 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.

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 it is your first time working as a server in a restaurant and your manager tells you 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.

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.

For some practice using context clues to understand new vocabulary, **try these activities** from Lethbridge College.

Understanding Words Through the Word Structure

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, it becomes not only easier to spell, but it also becomes easier to 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 Table 3.6.1 "Common Prefixes".

Tip:

The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is to **avoid** adding or leaving out any letters. See Table 3.6.1 "Common Prefixes" for examples of this rule.

Table 3.6.1 - Common 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

Prefix	Meaning	Example
sub	under	sub + merge = submerge
anti	against, opposing	anti + bacterial = antibacterial

Exercise 3.6.4

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!

Exercise 3.6.5

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. They also indicate the part of speech. Please see Table 3.6.2 for examples.

Table 3.6.2 -- Suffixes

Suffix	**Meaning**	**Example**
Noun Suffixes		
er	someone who performs an action	helper
ion	action or process of	celebration
ity	the state or condition of	equality
ment	the action or result of	movement
ness	a state or quality	fairness
or	a person who is something	investigator
sion	state or being	confusion
ship	position held	internship
th	state or quality	strength

Adjective suffixes		
able, ible	capable of being/doing	preventable
al	pertaining to	theatrical
ant	inclined to or tending to	defiant
ary	of or relating to	budgetary
ful	full of	grateful
ic	relating to	heroic
ious, ous	having qualities of	gracious
ive	quality or nature of	creative
less	without something	hopeless
y	made up of or characterized by	tasty
Verb Suffixes		
ed	past tense version of a verb	climbed
en	become	lengthen
er	action or process, making a comparison	faster
ing	verb form/present participle of an action	swimming
ize, ise	to cause or to become	advertize
Adverb Suffixes		
ly	the manner in which something is done	slowly
ward	in a certain direction	forward
wise	in relation to	clockwise

Suffixes and Spelling

There are a number of spelling rules that apply when adding a suffix to a word.

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 on the last syllable; the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.)
- cancel + ed = canceled (The accent is not on the last syllable.)

- prefer + ed = preferred

Exercise 3.6.6

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

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.

Additional Practice

For practice of this skill, try the **Structural Analysis Exercises** from Lethbridge College.

Using Reference Tools

The Dictionary

With so many different dictionary options out there, this video offers good advice in finding one that fits your personal needs.

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

The Thesaurus

The thesaurus is a very useful tool (book or website) to expand your vocabulary through finding synonyms. Beware! It is easy to choose a word with the wrong connotation or denotation, which could make your writing seem strange or unclear because the nuances of meaning may not be correct. However, when use in conjunction with a dictionary, expanding your vocabulary with a thesaurus can be useful.

Figure: CC BY-ND: Attribution-NoDerivatives

This website, also provides a way of expanding your vocabulary by demonstrating word webs, or words that are related to the word you are investigating.

Quiz

To check your understanding of vocabulary, take this quiz.

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3.7: Reading Strategies - Taking Notes

Note-Taking Methods

One final valuable tool to have in your arsenal as a student is a good note-taking system. Just the act of converting a spoken lecture to notes helps you organize and retain information, and of course, good notes also help you review important concepts later. Although taking good notes is an essential study skill, many students enter college without having received much guidance about note taking.

These sections discuss different strategies you can use to take notes efficiently. No matter which system you choose, keep the note-taking guidelines in mind.

General Note Taking Guidelines

1. Before class, quickly review your notes from the previous class and the assigned reading. Fixing key terms and concepts in your mind will help you stay focused and pick out the important points during the lecture.
2. Come prepared with paper, pens, highlighters, textbooks, and any important handouts.
3. Come to class with a positive attitude and a readiness to learn. During class, make a point of concentrating. Ask questions if you need to. Be an active participant.
4. During class, capture important ideas as concisely as you can. Use words or phrases instead of full sentences and abbreviate when possible.
5. Visually organize your notes into main topics, subtopics, and supporting points, and show the relationships between ideas. Leave space if necessary so you can add more details under important topics or subtopics.
6. Record the following:
    1. Ideas that the instructor repeats frequently or points out as key ideas
    2. Ideas the instructor lists on a whiteboard or transparency
    3. Details, facts, explanations, and lists that develop main points
    4. Definitions of key terms
7. Review your notes regularly throughout the semester, not just before exams.

Organizing Ideas in Your Notes

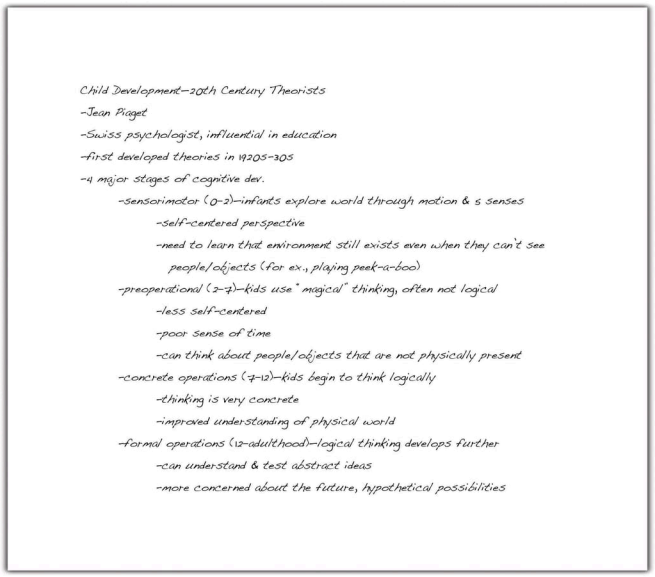
A good note-taking system needs to help you differentiate among major points, related subtopics, and supporting details. It visually represents the connections between ideas. Finally, to be effective, your note-taking system must allow you to record and organize information fairly quickly. Although some students like to create detailed, formal outlines or concept maps when they read, these may not be good strategies for class notes, because spoken lectures may not allow time for elaborate notes.

Instead, focus on recording content simply and quickly to create organized, legible notes. Try one of the following techniques.

Modified Outline Format

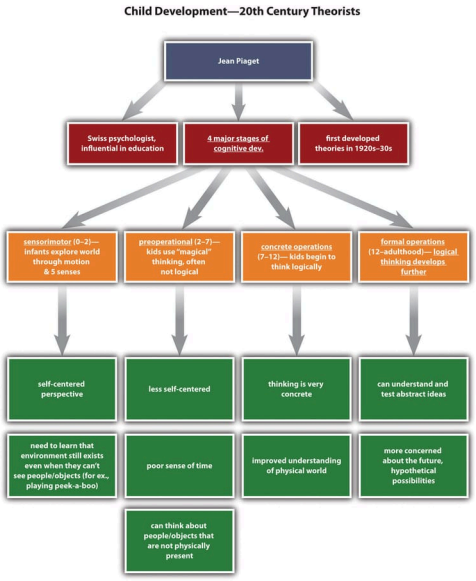
A modified outline format uses indented spacing to show the hierarchy of ideas without including roman numerals, lettering, and so forth. Just use a dash or bullet to signify each new point unless your instructor specifically presents a numbered list of items.

The first example shows Crystal's notes from a developmental psychology class about an important theorist in this field. Notice how the line for the main topic is all the way to the left. Subtopics are indented, and supporting details are indented one level further. Crystal also used abbreviations for terms like *development* and *example*.



Idea Mapping

If you discovered in Chapter 1 that you learn best with visual presentations, you may prefer to use a more graphic format for notes, such as an idea map. The next example shows how Crystal's lecture notes could be set up differently. Although the format is different, the content and organization are the same.



Charting

If the content of a lecture falls into a predictable, well-organized pattern, you might choose to use a chart or table to record your notes. This system works best when you already know, either before class or at the beginning of class, which categories you should include. The next figure shows how this system might be used.

THEORIST	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	YEARS ACTIVE	STAGES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Jean Piaget	Switzerland	1920s through 1970s	1. sensorimotor (0-2) 2. preoperational (2-7) 3. concrete operational (7-12) 4. formal operational (12-adulthood)
Erik Erikson	Denmark (studied in Austria, emigrated to US in 1930s)	1930s through 1980s	1. trust vs. mistrust (infants) 2. autonomy vs. shame and doubt (toddler) 3. initiative vs. guilt (preschool-K) 4. industry vs. inferiority (elementary school) 5. identity vs. role confusion (teen years) ***See also stages of adult development

The Cornell Note-Taking System

In addition to the general techniques already described, you might find it useful to practice a specific strategy known as the Cornell note-taking system. This popular format makes it easy not only to organize information clearly but also to note key terms and summarize content.

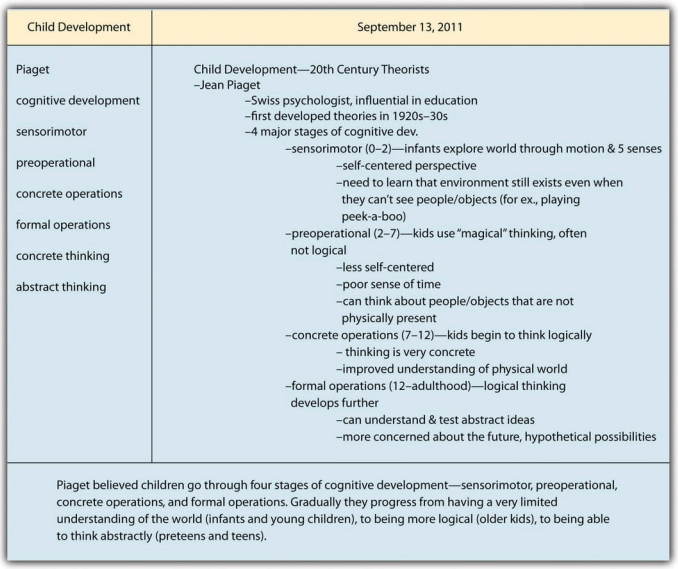
To use the Cornell system, begin by setting up the page with these components:

- The course name and lecture date at the top of the page
- A narrow column (about two inches) at the left side of the page
- A wide column (about five to six inches) on the right side of the page
- A space of a few lines marked off at the bottom of the page

During the lecture, record notes in the wide column. You can do so using the traditional modified outline format or a more visual format if you prefer.

Then, as soon as possible after the lecture, review your notes and identify key terms. Jot these down in the narrow left-hand column. You can use this column as a study aid by covering the notes on the right-hand side, reviewing the key terms, and trying to recall as much as you can about them so that you can mentally restate the main points of the lecture. Uncover the notes on the right to check your understanding. Finally, use the space at the bottom of the page to summarize each page of notes in your own words in a few sentences.

Using the Cornell system, Crystal's notes would look like the following:



Child Development	September 13, 2011
Piaget cognitive development sensorimotor preoperational concrete operations formal operations concrete thinking abstract thinking	Child Development—20th Century Theorists –Jean Piaget –Swiss psychologist, influential in education –first developed theories in 1920s–30s –4 major stages of cognitive dev. –sensorimotor (0–2)—infants explore world through motion & 5 senses –self-centered perspective –need to learn that environment still exists even when they can't see people/objects (for ex., playing peek-a-boo) –preoperational (2–7)—kids use "magical" thinking, often not logical –less self-centered –poor sense of time –can think about people/objects that are not physically present –concrete operations (7–12)—kids begin to think logically – thinking is very concrete –improved understanding of physical world –formal operations (12–adulthood)—logical thinking develops further –can understand & test abstract ideas –more concerned about the future, hypothetical possibilities

Piaget believed children go through four stages of cognitive development—sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operations, and formal operations. Gradually they progress from having a very limited understanding of the world (infants and young children), to being more logical (older kids), to being able to think abstractly (preteens and teens).

WRITING AT WORK

Often, at school or in the workplace, a speaker will provide you with pre-generated notes summarizing electronic presentation slides. You may be tempted not to take notes at all because much of the content is already summarized for you. However, it is a good idea to jot down at least a few notes. Doing so keeps you focused during the presentation, allows you to record details you might otherwise forget, and gives you the opportunity to jot down questions or reflections to personalize the content.

Over the next few weeks, establish a note-taking system that works for you.

1. If you are not already doing so, try using one of the aforementioned techniques. (Remember that the Cornell system can be combined with other note-taking formats.)
2. It can take some trial and error to find a note-taking system that works for you. If you find that you are struggling to keep up with lectures, consider whether you need to switch to a different format or be more careful about distinguishing key concepts from unimportant details.
3. If you find that you are having trouble taking notes effectively, set up an appointment with your school's academic resource center.

Underline or Highlight Interesting and Important Places in the Text

Underline or highlight words, sentences, and passages that stand out, for whatever reason. Underline the key arguments that you believe the author of the text is making, and mark any evidence, examples, and stories that seem interesting or important. You might want to differentiate the evidence from the main ideas by using a different color marker or indicating the difference in another way. But don't be afraid to "get it wrong." There is no right or wrong here. The sentences in the text that you underline may be the same or different from those noticed by your classmates, and this difference of interpretation is the essence of critical reading. Consider using different colored highlighters or pens for the various categories of the writing, such as new vocabulary, main ideas, and important examples. Otherwise, you risk turning your text into one big underline or highlight of the same color. It is also a good idea to re-state main ideas in your own words. This acts as a comprehension check and gives you a start on any writing you may do later.

Annotation

If you merely read a text, start to finish, and don't write anything, you won't have a good understanding of what you read. Sure, you might know the main point the author was trying to make, and that may be good enough if you're reading for fun, but it's not good enough for college.

Annotating is good for a number of reasons. It helps you in:

- staying engaged and connected while you read
- making sure you understand what you read
- finding the main points and how the text is organized
- identifying and sorting information for an assignment
- remembering what you read and thought about, at that time.

No matter what you are annotating, you should be **writing on the same page,** next to what's printed, on sticky notes, or on a double-entry journal. Annotating consists of many different practices: writing notes in the margins of the page, jotting symbols in the margins next to passages, underlining sentences, circling words, paraphrasing etc.

Key: We annotate differently depending on the purpose.

There are four general reasons for annotation.

1. When you annotate for ENGAGEMENT, your priority is to keep focused on, and emotionally and intellectually connected to, what you are reading.

What you might do or think:	**What you might write:**
Respond to the text emotionally	*Inspiring :-) Discouraging :-(*
Relate to the text	*Ref. Psych Prof. point about anxiety* *Me in 9th grade*
Visualize information or concept	Doodle or draw a picture to remind yourself quickly.
Ask questions	*How does this compare to middle-class students?*
Observations about text	*Disagree (with the opinion he just described)*
Predict what is coming next	*I think the character will….*
Connect with other knowledge	*Different cause/effect than Wise describes*

2. When you realize you are confused, you need some strategies for **COMPREHENSION**.

What you might do or think:	**What you might write:**
You don't understand a word or term, so you go back and reread the sentence and figure it out – or you look it up.	Circle the word, and, after you figure out its meaning, write the meaning next to the word.

You don't understand a word, but realize you can keep reading and still understand.	Circle the word and look it up later.
You don't understand what the author is saying as it applies to that particular situation.	Write your question next to the text and bring it up in class or with a tutor.

3. When you are annotating to find the author's MAIN POINTS, you will need to identify the supporting points and details used to build the argument in order to discuss and write about it. This is also a helpful check for your understanding, especially if you try to rewrite the main points in your own words.

What you might do or think:	**What you might write:**
You find the sentence that seems to be the main idea of a paragraph.	Underline and paraphrase it briefly.
You don't see the main point actually written there, but you know what it is.	Paraphrase it.
The author says she has three reasons for her point, so you decide to make sure you can find all three.	Write "3 reasons" in the margin, and underline and number the reasons – 1, 2, 3 – when you find them.
The author gives examples for her point.	Underline them and write "ex" and draw an arrow to the point that the example is supporting.

4. When you annotate to find details and INFORMATION to use in your ESSAY, you will want to start to organize that information right on the page itself.

What you might do or think:	**What you might write:**
You find a statistic showing that more first generation students than ever are going to college.	Underline the statistic and write *1st gen population > ever*
You find a quote or detail that supports the idea that wages of people of color were rising in the '60s due to affirmative action	Underline it and write *aff. action 60s ups wages*

Read over your annotations to help you remember what you read and THOUGHT!

Taking Notes

Take notes on the margins of the text. If you do not want to write on your book or journal, attach post-it notes with your comments to the text. If your source is electronic, use the highlighting and commenting functions available in many e-readers. Try to avoid reading text on your phone because the screen is small, and cell phones don't generally have annotation capabilities. Do not be afraid to write too much. This is the stage of the reading process during which you are actively finding meaning. Writing about what you read is the best way to make sense of it, especially, if the text is difficult. Writing about what you read will help you not only to remember the argument that the author is trying to advance, but it will also help you create your own interpretations of the text you are reading.

Here are some things you can do in your comments:

- Ask questions.
- Identify unknown vocabulary.
- Agree or disagree with the author.
- Question the evidence presented in the text.
- Offer counter-evidence.
- Offer additional evidence, examples, stories, etc. that support the author's argument.
- Mention other texts that advance the same or similar arguments.
- Mention personal experiences that enhance your reading of the text.

Keep a Double-Entry Journal

Many writers like double-entry journals because they allow us to make that leap from summary of a source to interpretation and persuasion. To start a double-entry journal, divide a page into two columns. As you read, in the left column write down interesting and important words, sentences, quotations, and passages from the text. (Be sure to include the page number to make it easier for yourself later if you use it in your writing.) In the right column, write your reaction and responses to the passages. Be as formal or informal as you want. Record words, passages, and ideas from the text that you find useful, interesting, or in any way striking or unusual. Quote or summarize in full, accurately, and fairly. In the right-hand side column, ask the kinds of questions and provide the kinds of responses that will later enable you to create an original reading of the text, and use that reading to create your own paper.

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3.8: Main Ideas and Supporting Details

Analyze Thesis or Main Ideas of Texts

Being able to identify the purpose and thesis of a text, while you're reading it, takes practice. Questioning the text you're reading is a good place to start. When trying to isolate the thesis, or main idea, of your reading material, consider these questions:

- What is the primary subject of this text?
- Is the author trying to inform me, or persuade me?
- What does the author think I need to know about this subject?
- Why does the author think I need to know about this subject?

Sometimes the answer to these questions will be very clearly stated in the text itself. Sometimes it is less obvious, and in those cases, the techniques on the following page will be useful.

Implicit vs. Explicit Main Idea/ Thesis Statements

According to author Pavel Zemliansky,

> Arguments then, can be explicit and implicit, or implied. Explicit arguments contain noticeable and definable thesis statements and lots of specific proofs. Implicit arguments, on the other hand, work by weaving together facts and narratives, logic and emotion, personal experiences and statistics. Unlike explicit arguments, implicit ones do not have a one-sentence thesis statement. Instead, authors of implicit arguments use evidence of many different kinds in effective and creative ways to build and convey their point of view to their audience. Research is essential for creative effective arguments of both kinds.

Even if what you're reading is an informative text, rather than an argumentative one, it might still rely on an implicit thesis statement. It might ask you to piece together the overall purpose of the text based on a series of content along the way.

The following video defines the key terms explicit and implicit, as they relate to thesis statements and other ideas present in what you read. It also introduces the excellent idea of the **reading voice** and the **thinking voice** that strong readers use as they work through a text.

To help keep you on your toes, the author of this video challenges you to find her spelling mistake in one of her cards along the way!

YouTube Video

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Video 3.8.1

Explicit v. implicit. **Authored by:** Michele Armentrout. *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Take the quiz about implicit and explicit thesis statements to see how well you have understood the information.

Thesis and Topic Sentences

You'll remember that the first step of the reading process, **previewing,** allows you to get a big-picture view of the document you're reading. This way, you can begin to understand the structure of the overall text. A later step in the reading process, **summarizing**, allows you to encapsulate what a paragraph, section, or the whole document is about. When summarizing individual paragraphs, it's likely that your summary ends up looking like a paraphrase of that paragraph's **topic sentence**.

A paragraph is composed of multiple sentences focused on a single, clearly-defined topic. There should be exactly one main idea per paragraph, so whenever an author moves on to a new idea, he or she will start a new paragraph. For example, this paragraph defines what a paragraph is, and now we will start a new paragraph to deal with a new idea: how a paragraph is structured.

Paragraphs are actually organized much like persuasive papers are. Just like a paper has a **thesis statement** followed by a body of supportive evidence, paragraphs have a topic sentence followed by several sentences of support or explanation. If you look at this paragraph, for example, you will see that it starts with a clear topic sentence letting you know that paragraphs follow a structure similar to that of papers. The next sentence explains how a paragraph is like a paper, and then two more sentences show how this paragraph follows that structure. All of these sentences are clearly connected to the main idea.

The topic sentence of a paragraph serves two purposes: first, it lets readers know what the paragraph is going to be about; second, it highlights the connection between the present paragraph and the one that came before. The topic sentence of this paragraph explains to a reader what a topic sentence does, fulfilling the first function. It also tells you that this paragraph is going to talk about one particular aspect of the previous paragraph's main idea: we are now moving from the general structure of the paragraph to the particular role of the topic sentence.

After the topic sentence introduces the main idea, the remainder of the sentences in a paragraph should support or explain this topic. These additional sentences might detail the author's position on the topic. They might also provide examples, statistics, or other evidence to support that position. At the end of the paragraph, the author may include some sort of conclusion or a transition that sets up the next idea he or she will be discussing (for example, you can see this clearly in the last sentence of the third paragraph).

The Three Parts of a Paragraph

1) Topic

The topic is the subject of the paragraph. It can be:

- A few words long
- These words (or words related to the topic) are typically repeated throughout the paragraph
- Answers the question: *What is this paragraph about?*

2) Main Idea

This is the writer's overall point. It can be:

- A complete sentence
  - If stated in the paragraph, it's called a "topic sentence"
  - If unstated in the paragraph, the reader must figure it out (infer it) from details
- General enough to cover the more specific supporting details
- Usually (but not always!) near the beginning of the paragraph
- Answers the question: *What is the overall point being made about the topic?"*

3) Supporting Details

These are the details in the paragraph that support the main idea. They can be either major or minor supporting details.

Tips for Identifying Main Ideas

Although you are learning to put the main idea first in your own paragraphs, professional writers often don't. Sometimes the first sentence of a paragraph provides background information, poses a question, or serves as a bridge from a previous paragraph. Don't assume it is the main idea. Use these tips instead:

- Look for a general statement that appears to "cover" the other information.
- Figure out the general topic of the paragraph first. Then ask yourself, *"What point is the writer trying to make about this topic?"*
- Look for clue words. Main ideas sometimes have words such as "some" or plural nouns like "ways" or "differences" that signal a list of details to come.
- Check your guess! Once you think you've found the main idea, ask yourself:
  - *Is this statement supported by most of the other information?*
  - *If I turn this statement into a question, does the other information answer it?*

SPECIAL NOTE: Sometimes a main idea covers more than one paragraph. This may happen in newspaper articles or when the writer has a lot to say about one topic.

Difference Between the Topic and Main Idea

To understand the difference between a main idea and the topic, imagine that you are listening to your friends talk about their pets. The TV is on, so all you can make out are the name of their pets. If someone asked you what the topic was, you would say "pets." But because you couldn't hear the whole thing, you didn't understand the "main idea" was whose pet was the best. The topic is very broad – the main idea is more specific. The sentences that follow in the paragraph exercise offer examples or descriptions to illustrate or explain the main idea. Note the reading-writing connection--while we are finding the main idea as readers, we will be using the main ideas to write topic sentences in paragraphs.

Exercise 3.8.1

Read the following paragraph and then decide what the main idea is.

One myth about exercise is that if a woman lifts weights, she will develop muscles as large as a man's. Without male hormones, however, a woman cannot increase her muscle bulk as much as a man's. Another misconception about exercise is that it increases the appetite. Actually, regular exercise stabilizes the blood-sugar level and prevents hunger pangs. Some people also think that a few minutes of exercise a day or one session a week is enough, but at least three solid workouts a week are needed for muscular and cardiovascular fitness.

Choose the Main Idea:

a) Women who lift weights cannot become as muscular as men.

b) There are several myths about exercise.

c) Exercise is beneficial to everyone.

d) People use many different excuses to avoid exercising.

Explain why you did or did not choose each possible answer above.

a) _____

_____

b) _____

_____

c) _____

_____

d) _____

_____

Exercise 3.8.2

Read the following paragraph and then decide what the main idea is.

"To Sherlock Holmes she is always THE woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen, but as a lover he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer. They were admirable things for the observer--excellent for drawing the veil from men's motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results."

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 3.8.3

Here is another example from the same story, see if you can find the main idea:

One night--it was on the twentieth of March, 1888--I was returning from a journey to a patient (for I had now returned to civil practice), when my way led me through Baker Street. As I passed the well-remembered door, which must always be associated in my mind with my wooing, and with the dark incidents of the Study in Scarlet, I was seized with a keen desire to see Holmes again, and to know how he was employing his extraordinary powers. His rooms were brilliantly lit, and, even as I looked up, I saw his tall, spare figure pass twice in a dark silhouette against the blind. He was pacing the room swiftly, eagerly, with his head sunk upon his chest and his hands clasped behind him. To me, who knew his every mood and habit, his attitude and manner told their own story. He was at work again.

a. One night--it was on the twentieth of March, 1888--I was returning from a journey to a patient (for I had now returned to civil practice), when my way led me through Baker Street.

b. As I passed the well-remembered door, which must always be associated in my mind with my wooing, and with the dark incidents of the Study in Scarlet, I was seized with a keen desire to see Holmes again, and to know how he was employing his extraordinary powers

c. His rooms were brilliantly lit, and, even as I looked up, I saw his tall, spare figure pass twice in a dark silhouette against the blind.

d. He was pacing the room swiftly, eagerly, with his head sunk upon his chest and his hands clasped behind him.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 3.8.4

Let's try one more. Read the following and select which one is the main idea from the list below:

"At three o'clock precisely I was at Baker Street, but Holmes had not yet returned. The landlady informed me that he had left the house shortly after eight o'clock in the morning. I sat down beside the fire, however, with the intention of awaiting him, however long he might be. I was already deeply interested in his inquiry, for, though it was surrounded by none of the grim and strange features which were associated with the two crimes which I have already recorded, still, the nature of the case and the exalted station of his client gave it a character of its own. Indeed, apart from the nature of the investigation which my friend had on hand, there was something in his masterly grasp of a situation, and his keen, incisive reasoning, which made it a pleasure to me to study his system of work, and to follow the quick, subtle methods by which he disentangled the most inextricable mysteries. So accustomed was I to his invariable success that the very possibility of his failing had ceased to enter into my head."

a. At three o'clock precisely I was at Baker Street, but Holmes had not yet returned.

b. The landlady informed me that he had left the house shortly after eight o'clock in the morning.

c. I sat down beside the fire, however, with the intention of awaiting him, however long he might be

d. I was already deeply interested in his inquiry, for, though it was surrounded by none of the grim and strange features which were associated with the two crimes which I have already recorded, still, the nature of the case and the exalted station of his client gave it a character of its own.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Reading-Writing Connection: Thesis Statements

Exercise 3.8.5

I. Develop a paragraph. Your paragraph must include the following:

- Between 7-9 sentences
- A main idea sentence
- Each sentence must be developed, and checked for correct spelling and grammar
- Have at least three of the four different types of sentences (simple, complex, compound, compound-complex)
- Attach your pre-writing practice after the paragraph, to identify which sentences are major and minor detail sentence

Supporting Details

Earlier we covered what a main idea sentence was: a sentence that names the topic, and allows the reader to understand the focus of the paragraph to follow. It is logical then that the rest of the sentences in the paragraph support the main idea sentence. Support means that they either explain something about the topic, or they offer an example.

We've examined the relationship between a text's thesis statement and its overall organization through the idea of topic sentences in body paragraphs. But of course body paragraphs have a lot more "stuff" in them than just topic sentences. This section will examine in more detail what that "stuff" is made of.

First, watch this video that details the relationship between a topic sentence and supporting details, using the metaphor of a house. The video establishes the difference between major and minor details, which will be useful to apply in coming discussions. (The video has instrumental guitar for audio, but no spoken words, so it can be watched without sound if desired.)

YouTube Video

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View this YouTube Video online

Video 3.8.1

Video: Supporting Details. **Authored by:** Mastering the Fundamentals of College Reading and Writing. *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

The following image shows the visual relationship between the overall thesis, topic sentences, and supporting ideas:

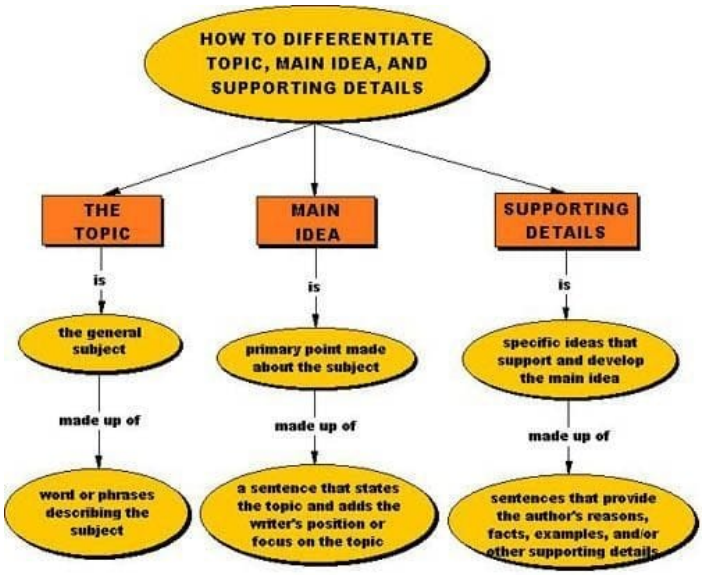

Figure: CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike

This next image shows where a topic sentence might reside in the paragraph, in relation to the rest of the supporting details:

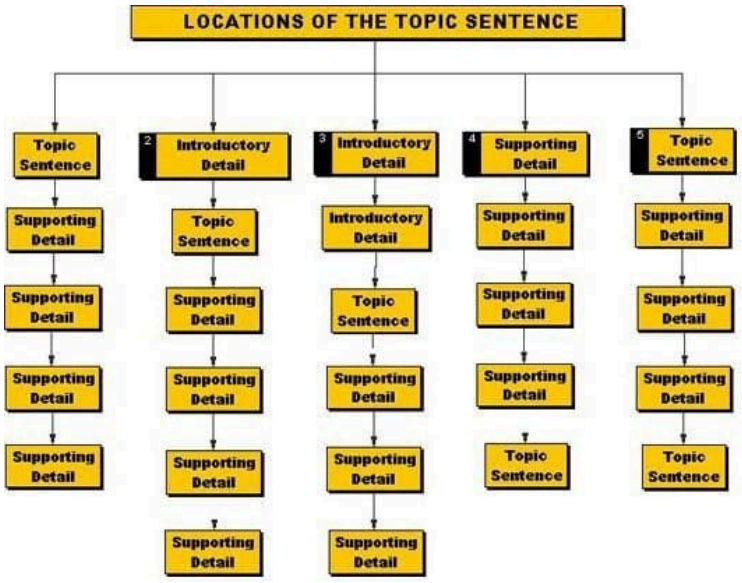

Figure: CC BY-SA

In #5 of the sequence above, the topic sentence is rephrased between the opening and closing of the paragraph, to reinforce the concept more strongly.

Point, Illustration, Explanation (P.I.E.)

Many authors use the PIE format to structure their essays. PIE = point, illustration, explanation to structure their body paragraph and support their thesis. The point furthers a thesis or claim and is the same as the main idea, the illustration provides support for the point, and the explanation tells the audience why the evidence provided furthers the point and/or the thesis.

Figure: CC BY-SA

For example, in his argument against the +/- grading system at Radford, student-writer Tareq Hajj makes the **Point** that "Without the A+, students with high grades in the class would be less motivated to work even harder in order to increase their grades."

He **Illustrates** with a quote from a professor who argues, "'(students) have less incentive to try'" (Fesheraki, 2013).

Hajj then **Explains** that "not providing [the most motivated students] with additional motivation of a higher grade ... is inequitable."

Through his explanation, Hajj links back to his claim that “A plus-minus grading scale … should not be used at Radford University” because, as he explains, it is “inequitable.” The PIE structure of his paragraph has served to support his thesis.

All Claims Need Evidence

Ever heard the phrase “everyone is entitled to his opinion”? It is indeed true that people are free to believe whatever they wish. However, the mere fact that a person believes something is not an argument in support of a position. If a text’s goal is to communicate effectively, it must provide valid explanations and sufficient and relevant evidence to convince its audience to accept that position. In other words, “every author is entitled to his opinion, but no author is entitled to have his opinion go unchallenged.”

What are the types of evidence?

Any text should provide illustrations for each of its points, but it is especially important to provide reliable evidence in an academic argument. This evidence can be based on **primary source material or data** (the author’s own experience and/or interviews, surveys, polls, experiments, that she may have created and administered). Evidence can also stem from **secondary source material or data** (books, journals, newspapers, magazines, websites or surveys, experiments, statistics, polls, and other data collected by others).

Let’s say, for example, that you are reading an argument that college instructors should let students use cell phones in class. Primary source material might include a survey the author administered that asks students if policies forbidding cell phone usage actually stop them from using their phones in class. Secondary sources might include articles about the issue from *Faculty Focus* or *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Logos, Ethos, Pathos

Writers are generally most successful with their audiences when they can skillfully and appropriately balance the three core types of appeals. These appeals are referred to by their Greek names: **logos** (the appeal to logic), **pathos** (the appeal to emotion), and **ethos** (the appeal to authority). All of these are used in one way or another in your body paragraphs, particularly as it relates to the support or information in the paragraph.

Figure: CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike

Logical Appeals

Authors using logic to support their claims will include a combination of different types of evidence. These include the following:

- established facts

- case studies
- statistics
- experiments
- analogies and logical reasoning
- citation of recognized experts on the issue

Authoritative Appeals

Authors using authority to support their claims can also draw from a variety of techniques. These include the following:

- personal anecdotes
- illustration of deep knowledge on the issue
- citation of recognized experts on the issue
- testimony of those involved first-hand on the issue

Emotional Appeals

Authors using emotion to support their claims again have a deep well of options to do so. These include the following:

- personal anecdotes
- narratives
- impact studies
- testimony of those involved first-hand on the issue

As you can see, there is some overlap on these lists. One technique might work simultaneously on multiple levels.

Most texts rely on one of the three as the primary method of support, but may also draw upon one or two others at the same time.

Check your understanding of supporting details by doing this quiz.

Exercise 3.8.6

Read the paragraph below and find the main idea and supporting details.

My parents were very strict when I was growing up. My mother in particular was always correcting my behavior. One day when I forgot to look both ways when I was crossing the street, my mother made me go back home; she said that I could not go out at all if I could not be safe. My father was more concerned with my grades. Every night he would make me go to my room before I could watch television.

Answer

Answer available at the end of this section.

If we were going to diagram the paragraph above, it would look like this:

MAIN IDEA

EXPLAIN (2)-_____EXPLAIN (4)

EXAMPLE (3) EXAMPLE (5)

Major and Minor Supporting Details

One way to talk about whether a sentence directly supports the main idea (the second level), or indirectly supports the main idea (the third level) is to call them MAJOR detail sentences or MINOR detail sentences. Major details directly explain something about the topic, while minor details offer examples for the Major detail that came right before.

Exercise 3.8.7

Read the paragraphs, and then identify each sentence as either a main idea, a major detail, or a minor detail sentence.

Single parents have to overcome many obstacles to return to school. If the child is very young, finding quality babysitting can be difficult. Many babysitters are unreliable and that can mean that the parent has to miss many classes, which can hurt their grades. It is also hard to find enough time to study. Children require a lot of attention and are also noisy, and that can interfere with a parent's ability to complete their homework. Finally, raising children is expensive. Many single parents discover that they can't meet the costs of both raising children and paying for tuition, books, and fees.

Sentence #1:
Sentence #2:
Sentence #3:
Sentence #4:
Sentence #5:
Sentence #6:
Sentence #7:

My grandmother turned 70 last year and celebrated by going skydiving. She said she always wanted to try and figured it was now or never. Many people think that when you get older you can no longer do fun things, but this is not true. The senior center in town offers dance lessons and also takes groups to the art museum. The classes are always full because so many people want to try new things. Towns are even developing senior living communities around activities such as golf and tennis. Those communities are very popular because people like to live with others who share their interests.

Sentence #1:
Sentence #2:
Sentence #3:
Sentence #4:
Sentence #5:
Sentence #6:
Sentence #7

Exercise 3.8.8

Below you will find several main idea sentences. Provide appropriate supporting sentences following the pattern of Major-Minor-Major-Minor.

1. It is not a good idea to watch a lot of television.
Major:
Minor:
Major:
Minor:

2. Coaches have good reasons to be firm with the players on their team.
Major:
Minor:
Major:
Minor:

3. Many people believe it is a bad idea to spank children.
Major:
Minor:
Major:
Minor:

4. There are several steps I can take to be successful in college.

Major:
Minor:
Major:
Minor:

Reading-Writing Connection: Supporting Details

Exercise 3.8.9

Return to the Thesis exercise you did previously. As part of that exercise, you identified two topic sentences from your selected reading. Now, look more closely at the paragraphs where those two topic sentences came from.

1. Write a paragraph that identifies the type of support that each paragraph from the reading uses to reinforce each of those two topic sentences. Are they narrative or personal examples? Are they facts or statistics? Are they quotes or paraphrases from research materials?
2. Write another paragraph that compares the effectiveness of the supporting claims of one of the selected paragraphs against the other one. Which seems more successful in its goal? Why do you feel that way?

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Answers

Exercise 3.8.2

The main idea of this paragraph is the first sentence. The first sentence identifies the two characters that the rest of the paragraph is going to describe, and suggests at their relationship. Each sentence that follows either describes the woman, Sherlock Holmes, or how he felt about her or her effect on him.

Exercise 3.8.3

The correct answer is a. The first sentence gives you the point-of-view, or who is the person explaining what is happening, and it lets you know that this person is going into a particular place. Each of the other sentences describes the place where he, Dr. Watson, entered, what it looked like, and who was in there.

B is not as strong a choice as a, because it refers to *Study in Scarlet* and Holmes' powers, which are not described in the rest of the paragraph. Choice B is too specific to be the main idea of this paragraph. Choices c and d are not correct because they are describing Holmes' actions, and his walking is not what the whole paragraph is about.

Exercise 3.8.4

The way to figure out that the answer, this time, is d, is to look at each sentence that follows and ask, does this refer back to the location, Baker Street? Do they refer back to the landlady? Do they refer back to Dr. Watson's waiting? Or, do they refer back to the case? They both refer back to the current investigation, by talking about Holmes' way of untangling mysteries, and that Watson's belief that the investigation would be a success.

The introduction to this paragraph may have thrown you off so be careful to read through the entire paragraph each time, and look at each sentence and its role within the paragraph. Mostly the main idea comes right up front – but not always!

Exercise 3.8.6

Let's examine the pattern for this paragraph. The first sentence (1) presents the main idea, that my parents were strict. The second sentence (2) explains what I mean by "strict," by saying that my mother was strict in correcting my behavior. The third sentence (3) offers an example of how she would correct my behavior. The fourth sentence (4) explains further, that my father was strict when it came to schoolwork, and then the fifth sentence (5) offers an example of how he was strict.

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3.9: Paraphrasing and Summarizing

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Paraphrasing

The essay assignments for most first-year composition classes call on you to use information from various texts. However, you cannot just copy the exact words out of the text you are writing about. If you do, you are plagiarizing and may put your academic career in jeopardy. If you are not citing direct quotes and citing them, you must put the words from the readings fully into your own words *and* cite them.

When paraphrasing, there are two basic kinds of changes you can make:

1. Change the words so you are using **synonyms** wherever possible. For example, imagine you are paraphrasing the sentence "After work, Judy rushed back to her house." Instead of "her house" you can say "her home" or "her place." Instead of "rushed" you could say "hurried."

2. Change the **sentence structure** so that it is different. One method is to switch the order of dependent and independent clauses. For example, instead of "After work, Judy rushed back to her house" you might write, "Judy was in a hurry to get back home at the end of the day."

However, this is really just a bit simplistic. It still may not give you a full paraphrase. A full paraphrase, which should convey another's idea fully and truly, should be in your own words (except for, perhaps, key words and data measures). One of the best ways to paraphrase another's idea is to put aside the text (don't look at it) and write down the gist (the general idea) of what the author is saying.

One important thing to remember is that **you choose which information is important.** For a simple example,

> *Joe drove after hours for Lyft for six months to save up enough money to buy himself a laptop.*

You could decide that some of the detail is not necessary for your paper. You could leave the unimportant detail out of your paraphrase, like this:

> *In order to afford a laptop, Joe worked for a long time.*

The author of this sentence decided that the specific job Joe held, the number of years, and the fact that it was his dream stereo wasn't important. That was his choice.

Here is a video that explains the above with additional examples.

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

Video 3.9.1

How to Paraphrase in Five Easy Steps. **Authored by:** Scribbr. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Remember: When paraphrasing another's idea, be sure to still provide an in-text citation.

How to avoid plagiarism when paraphrasing a text:

Stop, Thief! Avoid Plagiarism by Paraphrasing. **Authored by:** Emily Nimsakont. *All Rights Reserved.* Standard YouTube License.

Exercise 13.9.1

Using the methods discussed above (especially the "don't look at the original method") paraphrase the following passage on your own piece of paper.

Infectious diseases are transmitted from person to person by direct or indirect contact. Certain types of viruses, bacteria, parasites, and fungi can all cause infectious disease. Malaria, measles, and respiratory illnesses are examples of infectious diseases. (Source: Healthline.com. No author).

Exercise 23.9.1

Using the methods discussed above (especially the "don't look at the original method") paraphrase the following passage on your own piece of paper.

As the continued spread of COVID-19 puts much of the U.S. economy at a standstill, many are wondering how the economic slowdown will affect the real estate market. While construction is considered an essential business in the majority of states and real estate agents have transitioned to online showings, housing markets nationwide are likely to struggle, and some appear to be far more vulnerable than others. (Source: Evan Comen, May 26, 2020, USA Today)

Summarizing

How to Write a Summary

Proficient students understand that *summarizing*, identifying what is most important and restating the text (or other media) in your own words, is an important tool for college success.

After all, if you really know a subject, you will be able to summarize it. If you cannot summarize a subject, even if you have memorized all the facts about it, you can be absolutely sure that you have not learned it. And, if you truly learn the subject, you will still be able to summarize it months or years from now.

Proficient students may monitor their understanding of a text by summarizing as they read. They understand that if they can write a one- or two-sentence summary of each paragraph after reading it, then that is a good sign that they have correctly understood it. If they can not summarize the main idea of the paragraph, they know that comprehension has broken down and they need to use fix-up strategies to repair understanding.

How to Write a Summary (A Review)

A summary is a brief restatement of someone else's points *in your own words*. It needs to be:

- **Brief** – much shorter than the original, so not the details but just the main points
- **Complete** – including all the *key* information
- **Accurate** – the correct information
- **Objective** – **not** your opinion, but what the writer actually communicates

Step A. Annotating the Text for Main Ideas

1. Annotate for engagement and understanding: be sure you stayed awake and actually understood what you read!

2. Find the main ideas of each of the sections and, when appropriate, each of the paragraphs in your section.

3. You may underline the main ideas, or write them in your own words in the margin.

Remember, a main idea is a complete idea or sentence, not just a couple of words.

- *Don't write for your main idea: "youth unemployment"*
- *Do say: "Youth unemployment has increased."*

Step B. Planning the Summary

Write the main ideas of each paragraph and each section **in your own words** – and make sure each is a complete sentence. Do not include any judgment about what is in the article.

Step C. Write a Draft Summary

1. Introduce the name of the article and the author in the first sentence along with the main idea of the article.

2. Type up the paraphrased main ideas in complete sentences.

3. Analyze how the ideas connect and relate to each other. (For example, does one idea cause the next? Are some ideas examples of a larger point?) Organize the sentences into a logical order.

4. Include transition words that help the reader understand these connections.

5. Edit out ideas that repeat, and change the order of sentences as necessary.

6. Write the name of the article, the authors, and the controlling idea (main idea of the whole reading) in the first or second sentence.

7. Make sure that important details are included, but not details that are too specific.

8. Do not give your own opinions or say whether the authors do a good or bad job.

9. If the article discusses a study, the summary should briefly describe the purpose of the study and include the results of the study on a high level.

Summary Writing Format

- When writing a summary, remember that it should be in the form of a paragraph.
- A summary begins with an introductory sentence that states the text's title, author and main point of the text as you see it.
- A summary is written in your own words.
- A summary contains only the ideas of the original text. Do not insert any of your own opinions, interpretations, deductions or comments into a summary.

Example 3.9.1

Summary Writing Format Example

In the essay *Santa Ana*, author Joan Didion's main point is (*state main point*). According to Didion "...*passage 1*..." (para.3). Didion also writes "...*passage 2*..." (para.8). Finally, she states "...*passage 3*..." (para. 12) Write a last sentence that "wraps" up your summary; often a simple rephrasing of the main point.

Summary: Using it Wisely

Knowing how to summarize something you have read, seen, or heard is a valuable skill, one you have probably used in many writing assignments. It is important, though, to recognize when you must go beyond describing, explaining, and restating texts and offer a more complex analysis. This page will help you distinguish between summary and analysis and avoid inappropriate summary in your academic writing.

It is important that your keep your assignment and your audience in mind as you write. If your assignment requires an argument with a thesis statement and supporting evidence—as many academic writing assignments do—then you should limit the amount of summary in your paper. You might use summary to provide background, set the stage, or illustrate supporting evidence, but keep it very brief: a few sentences should do the trick. Most of your paper should focus on your argument.

Writing a summary of what you know about your topic before you start drafting your actual paper can sometimes be helpful. If you are unfamiliar with the material you're analyzing, you may need to summarize what you've read in order to understand your reading and get your thoughts in order. Once you figure out what you know about a subject, it's easier to decide what you want to argue.

Why is it so tempting to stick with summary and skip analysis?

Many writers rely too heavily on summary because it is what they can most easily write. If you're stalled by a difficult writing prompt, summarizing may be more appealing than staring at the computer for three hours and wondering what argument to make about the content.

To write a more analytical paper, you may need to carefully consider your writing assignment before reading, viewing, or listening to the material about which you'll be writing so that your encounter with the material will be more purposeful.

How do I know if I'm writing an argument instead of just summarizing?

If you answer yes to the questions below, it is a sign that your paper may have analysis rather than just summary (which is usually a good thing):

- Am I making an original argument about the text?
- Have I arranged my evidence around my own points, rather than just stating what the author has said?
- Am I explaining why or how an aspect of the text is significant?

Strategies for Writing a Summary

You can use T.I.P.S. to help you write a summary.

T=topic

I=main idea

P=major supporting points

S=summarize

Read through the selection you are summarizing thoroughly, jotting down the topic, main idea, major supporting points. Then, in a couple of lines, summarize the information you have jotted down in your own words. This is your summary.

How to Write a Summary by Paraphrasing Source Material

When you paraphrase material from a source, you restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them.

It is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing—that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates the gist of the ideas using the writer's own language and style

Example 3.9.1

Example Paraphrase Writing Format

In the essay *Santa Ana*, author Joan Didion's main point is (*state main point*). According to Didion *...PARAPHRASE 1...*". Didion also CLAIMS... PARAPHRASE *2...*". Finally, she CLAIMS "*...PARAPHRASE 3...*" Write a last sentence that "wraps" up your summary; often a simple rephrasing of the main point.

Exercise 3.9.1

Summarizing Circles: A small group/ class activity

Practice summarizing by working with teams.

1. Divide the text you are summarizing into small sections.

2. In groups of three or so, ask students to summarize each section. They must use words such as

"In other words,...." "Here the author is saying that...."To summarize,

3. Students should try to write their section down in a single line using these starters. They should not use the words used in the text, but instead come up with their own words to explain the ideas in the text. They should get at the main idea in the section rather than just repeat the details.

4. As a class, determine the main idea of the whole passage. Write up a sample summary on the board based on the summaries from the sections.

Contributors and Attributions

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3.10: How to Read Like a Writer

Figure: Image by Pixabay

How to Read Like a Writer

by Mike Bunn

In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London's famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three-hour performance of the musical *Les Miserables*. Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.

My job (in addition to wearing a red tuxedo jacket) was to sit inside the dark theater with the patrons and make sure nothing went wrong. It didn't seem to matter to my supervisor that I had no training in security and no idea where we kept the fire extinguishers. I was pretty sure that if there *was* any trouble I'd be running down the back stairs, leaving the patrons to fend for themselves. I had no intention of dying in a bright red tuxedo.

There was a Red Coat stationed on each of the theater's four floors, and we all passed the time by sitting quietly in the back, reading books with tiny flashlights. It's not easy trying to read in the dim light of a theatre—flashlight or no flashlight—and it's even tougher with shrieks and shouts and gunshots coming from the stage. I had to focus intently on each and every word, often rereading a single sentence several times. Sometimes I got distracted and had to re-read entire paragraphs. As I struggled to read in this environment, I began to realize that the way I was reading—one word at a time—was exactly the same way that the author had written the text. I realized writing is a word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence process. The intense concentration required to read in the theater helped me recognize some of the interesting ways that authors string words into phrases into paragraphs into entire books.

I came to realize that all writing consists of a series of choices.

I was an English major in college, but I don't think I ever thought much about reading. I read all the time. I read for my classes and on the computer and sometimes for fun, but I never really thought about the important connections between reading and writing, and how reading in a particular way could also make me a better writer.

What Does It Mean to Read Like a Writer?

When you Read Like a Writer (RLW) you work to identify some of the choices the author made so that you can better understand how such choices might arise in your own writing. The idea is to carefully examine the things you read, looking at the writerly techniques in the text in order to decide if you might want to adopt similar (or the same) techniques in your writing.

You are reading to learn about writing.

Instead of reading for content or to better understand the ideas in the writing (which you will automatically do to some degree anyway), you are trying to understand how the piece of writing was put together by the author and what you can learn about writing by reading a particular text. As you read in this way, you think about how the choices the author made and the techniques that he/she used are influencing your own responses as a reader. What is it about the way this text is written that makes you feel and respond the way you do?

The goal as you read like a writer is to locate what you believe are the most important writerly choices represented in the text—choices as large as the overall structure or as small as a single word used only once—to consider the effect of those choices on potential readers (including yourself). Then you can go one step further and imagine what *different* choices the author *might* have made instead, and what effect those different choices would have on readers.

Say you're reading an essay in class that begins with a short quote from President Barack Obama about the war in Iraq. As a writer, what do you think of this technique? Do you think it is effective to begin the essay with a quote? What if the essay began with a quote from someone else? What if it was a much *longer* quote from President Obama, or a quote from the President about something other than the war?

And here is where we get to the most important part: *Would you want to try this technique in your own writing?*

Would you want to start your own essay with a quote? Do you think it would be effective to begin your essay with a quote from President Obama? What about a quote from someone else? You could make yourself a list. What are the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote? What about the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote from the President? How would other readers respond to this technique? Would certain readers (say Democrats or liberals) appreciate an essay that started with a quote from President Obama better than other readers (say Republicans or conservatives)? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote from a *l*ess divisive person? What about starting with a quote from someone *more* divisive?

The goal is to carefully consider the choices the author made and the techniques that he or she used, and then decide whether you want to make those same choices or use those same techniques in your own writing. Author and professor Wendy Bishop explains how her reading process changed when she began to read like a writer:

It wasn't until I claimed the sentence as my area of desire, interest, and expertise—until I wanted to be a writer writing better—that I had to look underneath my initial readings . . . I started asking, *how—how* did the writer get me to feel, *how* did the writer say something so that it remains in my memory when many other things too easily fall out, *how* did the writer communicate his/her intentions about genre, about irony? (119–20).

Bishop moved from simply reporting her personal reactions to the things she read to attempting to uncover *how* the author led her (and other readers) to have those reactions. This effort to uncover how authors build texts is what makes Reading Like a Writer so useful for student writers.

How Is RLW Different from "Normal" Reading?

Most of the time we read for information. We read a recipe to learn how to bake lasagna. We read the sports page to see if our school won the game, Facebook to see who has commented on our status update, a history book to learn about the Vietnam War, and the syllabus to see when the next writing assignment is due. Reading Like a Writer asks for something very different.

In 1940, a famous poet and critic named Allen Tate discussed two different ways of reading:

There are many ways to read, but generally speaking there are two ways. They correspond to the two ways in which we may be interested in a piece of architecture. If the building has Corinthian columns, we can trace the origin and development of Corinthian columns; we are interested as historians. But if we are interested as architects, we may or may not know about the

history of the Corinthian style; we must, however, know all about the construction of the building, down to the last nail or peg in the beams. We have got to know this if we are going to put up buildings ourselves (506).

While I don't know anything about Corinthian columns (and doubt that I will ever *want* to know anything about Corinthian columns), Allen Tate's metaphor of reading as if you were an architect is a great way to think about RLW. When you read like a writer, you are trying to figure out how the text you are reading was constructed so that you learn how to "build" one for yourself. Author David Jauss makes a similar comparison when he writes that "reading won't help you much unless you learn to read like a writer. You must look at a book the way a carpenter looks at a house someone else built, examining the details in order to see how it was made" (64).

Perhaps I should change the name and call this Reading Like an Architect, or Reading Like a Carpenter. In a way those names make perfect sense. You are reading to see how something was constructed so that you can construct something similar yourself.

Why Learn to Read Like a Writer?

For most college students RLW is a new way to read, and it can be difficult to learn at first. Making things even *more* difficult is that your college writing instructor may expect you to read this way for class but never actually teach you how to do it. He or she may not even tell you that you're supposed to read this way. This is because most writing instructors are so focused on teaching writing that they forget to show students how they want them to read.

That's what this essay is for.

In addition to the fact that your college writing instructor may expect you to read like a writer, this kind of reading is also one of the very best ways to learn how to write well. Reading like a writer can help you understand how the process of writing is a series of making choices, and in doing so, can help you recognize important decisions you might face and techniques you might want to use when working on your own writing. Reading this way becomes an opportunity to think and learn about writing.

Charles Moran, a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, urges us to read like writers because:

When we read like writers we understand and participate in the writing. We see the choices the writer has made, and we see how the writer has coped with the consequences of those choices . . . We "see" what the writer is doing because we read as writers; we see because we have written ourselves and know the territory, know the feel of it, know some of the moves ourselves (61).

You are already an author, and that means you have a built-in advantage when reading like a writer. All of your previous writing experiences—inside the classroom and out—can contribute to your success with RLW. Because you "have written" things yourself, just as Moran suggests, you are better able to "see" the choices that the author is making in the texts that you read. This in turn helps you to think about whether you want to make some of those same choices in your own writing, and what the consequences might be for your readers if you do.

Figure: Image by Pixabay

What Are Some Questions to Ask Before You Start Reading?

As I sat down to work on this essay, I contacted a few of my former students to ask what advice they would give to college students regarding how to read effectively in the writing classroom and also to get their thoughts on RLW. Throughout the rest of the essay I'd like to share some of their insights and suggestions; after all, who is better qualified to help you learn what you need to know about reading in college writing courses than students who recently took those courses themselves?

One of the things that several students mentioned you should do first, before you even start reading, is to consider the *context* surrounding both the assignment and the text you're reading. As one former student, Alison, states: "The reading I did in college asked me to go above and beyond, not only in breadth of subject matter, but in depth, with regards to informed analysis and background information on *context*." Alison was asked to think about some of the factors that went into the creation of the text, as well as some of the factors influencing her own experience of reading—taken together these constitute the *context* of reading. Another former student, Jamie, suggests that students "learn about the historical context of the writings" they will read for class. Writing professor Richard Straub puts it this way: "You're not going to just read a text. You're going to read a text within a certain context, a set of circumstances . . . It's one kind of writing or another, designed for one audience and purpose or another" (138).

Among the contextual factors you'll want to consider before you even start reading are:

- Do you know the author's purpose when writing this piece?
- Do you know who the intended audience is for this piece of writing?

It may be that you need to start reading before you can answer these first two questions, but it's worth trying to answer them before you start. For example, if you know at the outset that the author is trying to reach a very specific group of readers, then his or her writerly techniques may seem more or less effective than if he/she was trying to reach a more general audience. Similarly—returning to our earlier example of beginning an essay with a quote from President Obama about the war in Iraq—if you know that the author's purpose is to address some of the dangers and drawbacks of warfare, this may be a very effective opening. If the purpose is to encourage Americans to wear sunscreen while at the beach this opening makes no sense at all. One former student, Lola, explained that most of her reading assignments in college writing classes were designed "to provoke analysis and criticisms into the style, structure, and *purpose* of the writing itself."

In What Genre Is This Written?

Another important thing to consider before reading is the genre of the text. Genre means a few different things in college English classes, but it's most often used to indicate the *type* of writing: a poem, a newspaper article, an essay, a short story, a novel, a legal brief, an instruction manual, etc. Because the conventions for each genre can be very different (who ever heard of a 900-page newspaper article?), techniques that are effective for one genre may not work well in another. Many readers expect poems and

pop songs to rhyme, for example, but might react negatively to a legal brief or instruction manual that did so. Another former student, Mike, comments on how important the genre of the text can be for reading:

I think a lot of the way I read, and of course, that depends on the type of text I'm reading. If I'm reading philosophy, I always look for signaling words (however, therefore, furthermore, despite) indicating the direction of the argument . . . when I read fiction or creative nonfiction, I look for how the author inserts dialogue or character sketches within narration or environmental observation. After reading To the Lighthouse [sic] last semester, I have noticed how much more attentive I've become to the types of narration (omniscient, impersonal, psychological, realistic, etc.), and how these different approaches are utilized to achieve an author's overall effect.

Although Mike specifically mentions what he looked for while reading a published novel, one of the great things about RLW is that it can be used equally well with either published or student-produced writing.

Is This a Published or a Student-Produced Piece of Writing?

As you read both kinds of texts you can locate the choices the author made and imagine the different decisions that he/she might have made. While it might seem a little weird at first to imagine how published texts could be written differently—after all, they were good enough to be published—remember that all writing can be improved. Scholar Nancy Walker believes that it's important for students to read published work using RLW because "the work ceases to be a mere artifact, a stone tablet, and becomes instead a living utterance with immediacy and texture. It could have been better or worse than it is had the author made different choices" (36). As Walker suggests, it's worth thinking about how the published text would be different—maybe even *better*—if the author had made different choices in the writing because you may be faced with similar choices in your own work.

Is This the Kind of Writing You Will Be Assigned to Write Yourself?

Knowing ahead of time what kind of writing assignments you will be asked to complete can really help you to read like a writer. It's probably impossible (and definitely too time consuming) to identify *all* of the choices the author made and *all* techniques an author used, so it's important to prioritize while reading. Knowing what you'll be writing yourself can help you prioritize. Maybe your instructor has assigned the text you're reading to serve as a model for the kind of writing you'll be doing later. Jessie, a former student, writes, "In college writing classes, we knew we were reading for a purpose—to influence or inspire our own work. The reading that I have done in college writing courses has always been really specific to a certain type of writing, and it allows me to focus and experiment on that specific style in depth and without distraction."

If the text you're reading is a model of a particular style of writing—for example, highly-emotional or humorous—RLW is particularly helpful because you can look at a piece you're reading and think about whether you want to adopt a similar style in your own writing. You might realize that the author is trying to arouse sympathy in readers and examine what techniques he/she uses to do this; then you can decide whether these techniques might work well in your own writing. You might notice that the author keeps including jokes or funny stories and think about whether you want to include them in your writing—what would the impact be on your potential readers

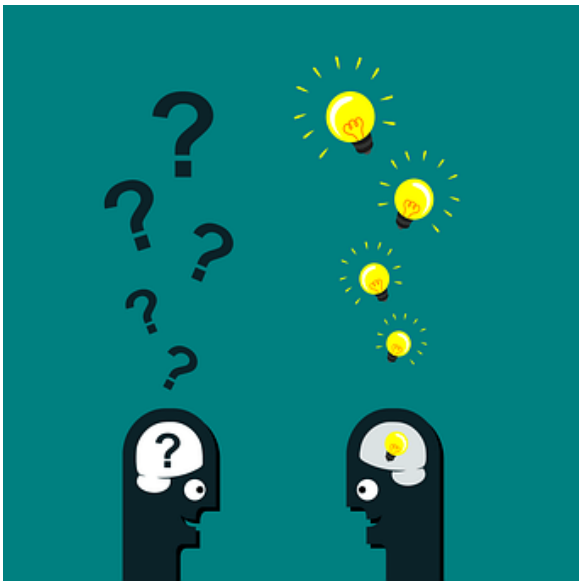

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Questions to Ask As You Are Reading

It is helpful to continue to ask yourself questions *as* you read like a writer. As you're first learning to read in this new way, you may want to have a set of questions written or typed out in front of you that you can refer to while reading. Eventually—after plenty of practice—you will start to ask certain questions and locate certain things in the text almost automatically. Remember, for you, and most students, this is a new way of reading, and you'll have to train yourself to do it well. Also keep in mind that you're reading to understand how the text was *written*—how the house was built—more than you're trying to determine the meaning of the things you read or assess whether the texts are good or bad.

First, return to two of the same questions I suggested that you consider *before* reading:

- What is the author's purpose in this piece of writing?
- Who is the intended audience?

Think about these two questions again as you read. It may be that you couldn't really answer them before, or that your ideas will change while reading. Knowing *why* the piece was written and *who* it's for can help explain why the author might have made certain choices or used particular techniques in the writing. And you can assess those choices and techniques based in part on how effective they are in fulfilling that purpose and/or reaching the intended audience.

Beyond these initial two questions, there is an almost endless list of questions you might ask regarding writing choices and techniques. Here are some of the questions that one former student, Clare, asks herself:

When reading I tend to be asking myself a million questions. If I were writing this, where would I go with the story? If the author goes in a different direction (as they so often do) from what I am thinking, I will ask myself, why did they do this? What are they telling me?

Clare tries to figure out why the author might have made a move in the writing that she hadn't anticipated, but even more importantly, she asks herself what *she* would do if she were the author. Reading the text becomes an opportunity for Clare to think about her own role as an author.

Here are some additional examples of the kinds of questions you might ask yourself as you read:

- How effective is the language the author uses? Is it too formal? Too informal? Perfectly appropriate?

Depending on the subject matter and the intended audience, it may make sense to be more, or less, formal in terms of language. As you begin reading, you can ask yourself whether the word choice and tone/ language of the writing seem appropriate.

- What kinds of evidence does the author use to support his/her claims? Does he/she use statistics? Quotes from famous people? Personal anecdotes or personal stories? Does he/she cite books or articles?
- How appropriate or effective is this evidence? Would a different type of evidence, or some combination of evidence, be more effective?

To some extent the kinds of questions you ask should be determined by the genre of writing you are reading. For example, it's probably worth examining the evidence that the author uses to support his/ her claims if you're reading an opinion column, but less important if you're reading a short story. An opinion column is often intended to convince readers of something, so the kinds of evidence used are often very important. A short story *may* be intended to convince readers of something, sometimes, but probably not in the same way. A short story rarely includes claims or evidence in the way that we usually think about them.

- Are there places in the writing that you find confusing? What is it about the writing in those places that makes it unclear or confusing?

It's pretty normal to get confused sometimes while reading, especially while reading for class, so it can be helpful to look closely at the writing to try and get a sense of exactly what tripped you up. This way you can learn to avoid those same problems in your own writing.

- How does the author move from one idea to another in the writing? Are the transitions between the ideas effective? How else might he/she have transitioned between ideas instead?

Notice that in these questions I am encouraging you to question whether aspects of the writing are *appropriate* and *effective* in addition to deciding whether you liked or disliked them. You need to imagine how other readers might respond to the writing and the techniques you've identified. Deciding whether you liked or disliked something is only about you; considering whether a technique is appropriate or effective lets you contemplate what the author might have been trying to do and to decide whether a majority of readers would find the technique successful. This is important because it's the same thing you should be thinking about while you are writing: how will readers respond to this technique I am using, to this sentence, to this word? As you read, ask yourself what the author is doing each step of the way, and then consider whether the same choice or technique might work in your own writing.

Figure: Image by Pixabay

What Should You Be Writing As You Are Reading?

The most common suggestion made by former students—was to mark up the text, make comments in the margins, and write yourself notes and summaries both during and after reading. Often the notes students took while reading became ideas or material for the students to use in their own papers. It's important to read with a pen or highlighter in your hand so that you can mark—right on the text—all those spots where you identify an interesting choice the author has made or a writerly technique you might want to use. One thing that I like to do is to highlight and underline the passage in the text itself, and then try to answer

the following three questions on my notepad:

- What is the technique the author is using here?
- Is this technique effective?
- What would be the advantages and disadvantages if I tried this same technique in my writing?

By utilizing this same process of highlighting and note taking, you'll end up with a useful list of specific techniques to have at your disposal when it comes time to begin your own writing.

What Does RLW Look Like in Action?

Let's go back to the opening paragraph of this essay and spend some time reading like writers, as a way to get more comfortable with the process:

In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London's famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three-hour performance of the musical Les Miserables*. Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.*

Let's begin with those questions I encouraged you to try to answer *before* you start reading. (I realize we're cheating a little bit in this case since you've already read most of this essay, but this is just practice. When doing this on your own, you should attempt to answer these questions before reading, and then return to them as you read to further develop your answers.)

- Do you know the author's purpose for this piece of writing? I hope the purpose is clear by now; if it isn't, I'm doing a pretty lousy job of explaining how and why you might read like a writer.
- Do you know who the intended audience is? Again, I hope that you know this one by now.
- What about the genre? Is this an essay? An article? What would you call it?
- You know that it's a published work and not student writing. How does this influence your expectations for what you will read?
- Are you going to be asked to write something like this yourself? Probably not in your college writing class, but you can still use RLW to learn about writerly techniques that you might want to use in whatever you do end up writing.

Now ask yourself questions *as* you read.

In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London's famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three-hour performance of the musical Les Miserables*. Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.*

Since this paragraph is the very first one, it makes sense to think about how it introduces readers to the essay. What technique(s) does the author use to begin the text? This is a personal story about his time working in London. What else do you notice as you read over this passage? Is the passage vague or specific about where he worked? You know that the author worked in a famous part of London in a beautiful theater owned by a well-known composer. Are these details important? How different would this opening be if instead I had written:

In 1997, I was living in London and working at a theatre that showed Les Miserables.

This is certainly shorter, and some of you may prefer this version. It's quick. To the point. But what (if anything) is lost by eliminating so much of the detail? I *chose* to include each of the details that the revised sentence omits, so it's worth considering why. Why did I mention where the theater was located? Why did I explain that I was living in London right after finishing college? Does it matter that it was after college? What effect might I have hoped the inclusion of these details would have on readers? Is this reference to college an attempt to connect with my audience of college students? Am I trying to establish my credibility as an author by announcing that I went to college? Why might I want the readers to know that this was a theater owned by Andrew Lloyd Weber? Do you think I am just trying to mention a famous name that readers will recognize? Will Andrew Lloyd Weber figure prominently in the rest of the essay?

These are all reasonable questions to ask. They are not necessarily the right questions to ask because there are no right questions. They certainly aren't the only questions you could ask, either. The goal is to train yourself to formulate questions as you read based on whatever you notice in the text. Your own reactions to what you're reading will help determine the kinds of

questions to ask.

Now take a broader perspective. I begin this essay—an essay about *reading*—by talking about my job in a theater in London. Why? Doesn't this seem like an odd way to begin an essay about reading? If you read on a little further (feel free to scan back up at the top of this essay) you learn in the third full paragraph what the connection is between working in the theater and reading like a writer, but why include this information at all? What does this story add to the essay? Is it worth the space it takes up?

Think about what effect presenting this personal information might have on readers. Does it make it feel like a real person, some "ordinary guy," is talking to you? Does it draw you into the essay and make you want to keep reading?

What about the language I use? Is it formal or more informal? This is a time when you can really narrow your focus and look at particular words:

Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.

What is the effect of using the word "antiquated" to describe the fire safety laws? It certainly projects a negative impression; if the laws are described as antiquated it means I view them as old-fashioned or obsolete. This is a fairly uncommon word, so it stands out, drawing attention to my choice in using it. The word also sounds quite formal. Am I formal in the rest of this sentence?

I use the word "performance" when I just as easily could have written "show." For that matter, I could have written "old" instead of "antiquated." You can proceed like this throughout the sentence, thinking about alternative choices I could have made and what the effect would be. Instead of "staff members" I could have written "employees" or just "workers." Notice the difference if the sentence had been written:

Because of old fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of workers inside watching the show in case of an emergency.

Which version is more likely to appeal to readers? You can try to answer this question by thinking about the advantages and disadvantages of using formal language. When would you want to use formal language in your writing and when would it make more sense to be more conversational?

As you can see from discussing just this one paragraph, you could ask questions about the text forever. Luckily, you don't have to. As you continue reading like a writer, you'll learn to notice techniques that seem new and pay less attention to the ones you've thought about before. The more you practice the quicker the process becomes until you're reading like a writer almost automatically.

I want to end this essay by sharing one more set of comments by my former student, Lola, this time about what it means to her to read like a writer:

Reading as a writer would compel me to question what might have brought the author to make these decisions, and then decide what worked and what didn't. What could have made that chapter better or easier to understand? How can I make sure I include some of the good attributes of this writing style into my own? How can I take aspects that I feel the writer failed at and make sure not to make the same mistakes in my writing?

Questioning why the author made certain decisions. Considering what techniques could have made the text better. Deciding how to include the best attributes of what you read in your own writing. This is what Reading Like a Writer is all about.

Are you ready to start reading?

Discussion

1. How is "Reading Like a Writer" similar to and/or different from the way(s) you read for other classes?
2. What kinds of choices do you make as a writer that readers might identify in your written work?
3. Is there anything you notice in this essay that you might like to try in your own writing? What is that technique or strategy? When do you plan to try using it?
4. What are some of the different ways that you can learn about the context of a text before you begin reading it?

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3.11: Key Takeaways

- Annotating while reading is the heart of the reading-writing connection because it allows you to monitor your comprehension and extend and explore the ideas in a text.
- Use previewing strategies to read actively.
- Vocabulary brings together your reading and writing because reading a new word helps you learn new words, and learning new words usually helps make your writing clearer.
- Learning to differentiate main ideas from supporting details is important for both reading and writing.
- Reading critically and questioning assumptions are essential to evaluate what you think about a source.
- Annotating gives you some writing to work with as you begin to draft your essay.
- If-then statements can help you break down the logic of statement to make stronger inferences and increase your reading comprehension.
- Thinking about the choices a writer might have made while you are reading will help you become a better writer.

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4: THE READING-WRITING PROCESS- PREWRITING

4.1: The Reading-Writing Process

4.2: Steps in the Reading-Writing Process

4.3: The College Essay Assignment- Analysis, Rubrics, and Critical Thinking

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4.1: The Reading-Writing Process

Reading and Writing in History

Compared to speaking and listening, writing and reading are much more recent phenomena. For many centuries it was assumed that the best way to learn to write well was either to pray, entreat the muses, or carefully imitate writings that were already considered great. In England in the Middle Ages, reading was reserved for those in the clergy, nobles, and other elites' and "in 1820, only 12% of the world population could read and write."

In the Middle Ages, the invention of the printing press revolutionized the accessibility of books and pamphlets, and laws that had previously prevented people from learning to read were revoked, so more people learned to read. As more people read, more people wanted to write. Later, as more people went to school, teachers created rules to help them write "correctly." Unfortunately, this heavy emphasis on correctness and writing with a narrow set of rules did little to improve student writing. Simply knowing how to write grammatically correct prose is important, but it is not enough, by itself, to make writing effective or persuasive. Indeed, too much attention to correctness can result in unintentionally rigid or even comical writing. Legend has it that Winston Churchill grew so irritated at pedants telling him not to end his sentences with prepositions that he said to one of them, "Madame, that is a rule up with which I shall not put." Really, the best way to learn to become a better writer is to read more and note what the writer says.

Since the 1970s, writing instructors have been teaching writing, not as the following of fixed rules but rather as a dynamic process: a series of steps that writers can follow to produce texts. At first, these steps were taught as a somewhat rigid sequence. Since then, however, writing teachers began to emphasize "recursivity"--moving forward through some steps and then circling back to redo previous steps--as the more natural way to write. These steps involve both reading (someone else's or your own work) and writing throughout the composition process. In other words, while we still think of writing as a process taking place in a series of steps, we now understand that good writers tend to switch frequently among the different steps as they work, and each of these steps involve both reading and writing. An insight gained while editing (reading) one chapter might convince the writer that an additional chapter is needed; as a result, she might start another drafting phase--or even decide to divide one chapter into two or three, and begin reorganizing and developing new drafts. Likewise, failure to satisfy a publisher--whether it is your boss looking at a pamphlet you've written, or a book publisher deciding whether to print and sell your book--might lead the author all the way back to the idea-development or organizing stages. In short, while it is very useful to think of writing as a process, the process is not a clear, always-the-same series of steps. Instead, it is sometimes a forward-and-backward process in which you strive for simplicity while appealing to your audience, create but also organize, go crazy but follow some rules, and eventually create a product that works.

Product versus Process Approach to Writing

Figure: .

How do you develop an essay? The first and most important concept to understand is this: Essays do not happen all at once. An essay writer rarely creates an essay (the product) in one sitting due to the nature of essay writing. Essay writing is a process and, like any process, there are several stages or steps that you can learn and apply so that eventually you will develop your own process or processes for writing.

The chart below offers a fuller comparison of process versus product writing.

Product-Based Writing **Example: writing a news story under a deadline for a blog post**	**Process-Based Writing** **Example: writing a college essay**
• Assumes that writers produce texts in “one sitting,” without revising or taking pauses in their work.	• Assumes that the meaning of the writing is created and evolves during composing and revision.
• Forces the writer to “think before writing.” Product-oriented writers must have a clear plan for writing in their heads before composing.	• Multiple drafts are necessary as writing is a means of making knowledge, learning, and critical thinking.

• Immediacy and one draft forces the writer to settle for what came first, which may or may not be the writer's best work.	• Writing happens in stages that include prewriting, writing, and revising. • Writing is a non-linear process, and its stages often overlap.
• Little or no opportunity for feedback from others.	• Writers actively seek feedback from readers and judiciously use that feedback in their revisions.
• The product model is a “make it or break it” model. The very first reader who sees the writing, be it a boss at work or a teacher at school, is its judge and jury. The very first reader of a piece (a news editor or teacher) grades it or evaluates it in some way, returning the verdict to the writer.	• The process model empowers writers by encouraging them to understand and refine their writing strategies and techniques.

Process-Based Writing and Reading

In order to learn to see reading and writing as processes, it is first important to understand that the meaning of any text is created during the act of writing itself, not before. This is not to say that meaning is completely determined by the writer. A reader can also help conjure the meaning of a text, and -- during the drafting process -- can help the writers develop meanings that they may not have seen on their own.

In addition, reading is also a process that -- when a person reads actively -- involves writing. For example, when readers annotate texts, they think about their own experiences, the meaning of the words, and the connections between what the text says and other aspects of their lived experiences. Readers may annotate -- or take notes -- on the text, which in itself, is an act of creation.

Here are some basic principles of process-based reading and writing:

- Writing is a process and practice. The meaning of any text is created and evolves during composing and revision.
- In order to develop meaning fully, multiple drafts (which a writer and others read and re-read), are necessary. Writing is much more than a transcription tool. It is a means of making knowledge, learning, and critical thinking.
- The reading-writing process can be divided into stages that include research, invention, revision, and editing.
- Writing is a non-linear process, and its stages often overlap.
- Writers actively seek feedback from readers and judiciously use that feedback in their revisions.
- The process model empowers writers by encouraging them to understand and refine their writing strategies and techniques, and it encourages readers to look at texts and ideas from different points of view and revisit their original understanding.

Most writers do not begin a new piece with a set meaning in their minds. We may have an initial idea for a piece of writing, but in order to implement that idea, we have to shape and re-shape it constantly as we write, read, and re-write. The meaning of any text is an ever-evolving entity. Thinking does not precede writing, but happens simultaneously with writing. This shaping and re-shaping of the text’s meaning takes place through drafting, re-reading, and revision. For example, all of the chapters in this book went through several reads and drafts with multiple revisions before it was published.

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Common Misconceptions about the Reading-Writing Process

Most people have used this creative process in one way or another, but many have misconceptions about how to use it to write. Here are a few of the most common misconceptions students have about the writing process:

- **"I do not have to waste time on prewriting if I understand the assignment."** Even if the task is straightforward and you feel ready to start writing, take some time to develop ideas before you plunge into your draft. **Freewriting**—writing about the topic non-stop for a set period of time—is one prewriting technique
- **"It is important to complete a formal, numbered outline for every writing assignment."** For some assignments, such as lengthy research papers, proceeding without a formal outline can be very difficult. However, for other assignments, a structured set of notes or a detailed graphic organizer may suffice. The important thing is to have a solid plan for organizing ideas and details.
- **"My draft will be better if I write it when I am feeling inspired."** By all means, take advantage of those moments of inspiration. However, understand that sometimes you will have to write when you are not in the mood. Sit down and start your draft even if you do not feel like it. If necessary, force yourself to write for just one hour. By the end of the hour, you may be far more engaged and motivated to continue. If not, at least you will have accomplished part of the task.
- **"My instructor will tell me everything I need to revise."** If your instructor chooses to review drafts, the feedback can help you improve. However, it is still your job, not your instructor's, to transform the draft into a final, polished piece. That task will be much easier if you give your best effort to the draft before submitting it. During revision, do not just go through and implement your instructor's corrections, see where else the comments written by your instructor apply. Remember, instructors are not editors; instructors guide you to learn to edit your own work. Take time to determine what you can change to make the work the best it can be.
- **"I am a good writer, so I do not need to revise or edit."** Even the best writers need to revise and edit their work.(It could help you catch an embarrassing typo or two). Revising and editing are the two steps that make good writers into great writers.

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4.2: Steps in the Reading-Writing Process

Steps in the Reading-Writing Process

At the end of Chapter 1, we touched briefly on the writing process. Here, we will go into the process in more detail, adding the relevant reading sections as well. Chances are, you have already used this process as a writer. You may also have used it for other types of creative projects, such as developing a sketch into a finished painting or composing a song. The steps listed below apply broadly to any project that involves creative thinking. You come up with ideas (often vague at first), you work to give them some structure, you make a first attempt, you figure out what needs improving, and then you refine it until you are satisfied.

Although the following parts of the process may seem linear, you do have to start somewhere, but expect to go back and forth between the different parts of the process.

- **Reading and Responding:** Here, the student reads, annotating background notes and articles relevant to the topic.
- **Prewriting:** In this step, the writer generates ideas to write about, often by revisiting their annotations, and begins to develop these ideas.
- **Outlining a structure of ideas:** In this step, the writer determines the overall organizational structure of the writing and creates an outline to organize ideas. Usually this step involves some additional fleshing out of the ideas generated in the first step. It's possible that this is done concurrently or after drafting.
- **Writing a rough draft:** In this step, the writer uses the work completed in prewriting to develop a first draft. The draft covers the ideas the writer brainstormed and follows the organizational plan that was laid out in the first step.
- **Revising:** In this step, the writer revisits the draft to review, reorganize, and reshape its content. This stage involves moderate and sometimes major changes: adding or deleting a paragraph, phrasing the main point differently, expanding an important idea, reorganizing content, and so forth.
- **Editing:** In this step, the writer reviews the draft to make editorial changes to the text. Editing involves making changes to improve style, cohesion, and adherence to standard writing conventions—for instance, replacing a vague word with a more precise one or fixing errors in grammar and spelling.
- **Proofreading:** Proofreading is a final check for spelling, punctuation, formatting, and grammar that should be treated separately from the editing process, which is one step before. Once proofreading is complete, the work is a finished piece and ready to share with others.

The table below more fully characterizes these five main processes. As you can see, writing is much more than the actual physical act of sitting at the keyboard and creating a draft.

Table 4.2.1 -- The Writing Process

1. Considering Writing	2. Prewriting	3. Developing Thesis / Topic Sentences / Support	4. Writing the Draft	5. Revising*

may include these components: • identifying purpose • identifying audience • identifying type of writing • identifying context of the writing • ***creating a working thesis for the idea you want to express***	may include these components: • journaling • free writing • brainstorming • mapping • listing • outlining • ***creating a working thesis***	may include these components: • ***creating a working thesis*** • developing ideas with details, examples – additional brainstorming • organizing supporting information into logical groups – developing topic sentences • researching, reading, and verifying sources • Note-takingF	may include these components: • ***creating and/or revising a thesis*** • revising topic sentence • developing paragraphs fully with analysis • organizing and linking paragraphs • writing an introduction • writing a conclusion	may include these components: • **revising thesis for clarity, appropriateness** • **revising for unity between thesis and support** • **revising support: to add/subtract** • **revising for structure: topic sentences, paragraphs, etc.** • **revising in light of writing considerations: purpose, audience, type, context** • **revising for cohesion** • revising for grammatical correctness • revising for language style • revising for appropriate documentation • revising for appropriate layout/ format

Image from College Writing by Susan Oaks.

One of the first things you may have noticed is the prevalence of that word "**thesis**." Sometimes you start off your writing process with a main idea, argument, or insight (thesis) that you want to write about, and sometimes the main idea or thesis evolves as you move through the various stages. Know that in any course on college writing, you'll focus consistently on the concept of "thesis" throughout the writing process.

Although the table above implies a sequence to these processes, given that we generally read tables from left to right and from top to bottom, the sequence actually varies from writer to writer, and from writing project to writing project. Often, writing processes are depicted as in the image: a circle that can be accessed at any given point. However you choose to visualize "how

writing happens," just remember that it doesn't happen all at once, and it certainly can happen in different ways.

Tip:

Timed Writing

The writing process also applies to timed writing tasks, such as essay exams. Before you begin writing, read the question thoroughly and think about the main points to include in your response. Use scrap paper to sketch out a very brief outline. Keep an eye on the clock as you write your response so you will have time to review it and make any needed changes before turning in your exam.

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4.3: The College Essay Assignment- Analysis, Rubrics, and Critical Thinking

Figure: Image by Pixabay

The Prompt: What Does "Analyze" Mean Anyway?

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. Here 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. Another common one is a scaffolded research paper sequence: you first propose a topic, then prepare an annotated bibliography, then a first draft, then a final draft, and, perhaps, a reflective paper. The preparatory assignments help ensure that you're on the right track, beginning the research process long before the final due date, and taking the time to consider recasting your thesis, finding additional sources, or reorganizing your discussion.[5] If the assignment isn't part of a sequence, think about where it falls in the semester, and how it relates to readings and other assignments. Are there headings on the syllabus that indicate larger units of material? 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. You should also check your notes and online course resources for any other guidelines about the workflow. Maybe you got a rubric a couple weeks ago and forgot about it. Maybe your instructor posted a link about "how to make an annotated bibliography" but then forgot to mention it in class.
3. *Try a free-write*. When handing out an assignment, teachers often ask students to do a five-minute or ten-minute 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. 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 writers 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 then you’re off and running. As instructors, we’ve found that asking students to do a brief free-write right after I hand out an assignment generates useful clarification questions. If your instructor doesn’t make time for that in class, a quick free-write on your own will quickly reveal whether you need clarification about the assignment and, often, what questions to ask.

4. *Ask for clarification the right way*. Even the most skillfully crafted assignments may need some verbal clarification, especially because students’ familiarity with the field can vary enormously. Asking for clarification is a good thing. Be aware, though, that instructors get frustrated when they perceive that students want to skip doing their own thinking and instead receive an exact recipe for an 'A' paper. Go ahead and ask for clarification, but try to convey that you want to learn and you’re ready to work.In general, avoid starting a question with “Do we have to …” because I can guarantee that your instructor is thinking, “You don’t *have* to do crap. You’re an adult. You chose college. You chose this class. You’re free to exercise your right to fail.” Similarly, avoid asking the professor about what he or she “wants.” You’re not performing some service for the professor when you write a paper. What they “want” is for you to really think about the material.
5. *So what does analyze mean?* Analyze means breaking down a topic into component parts and exploring and examining those various parts to come to some sort of new understanding.

Table 4.3.1 -- Clarifying Questions for Essay Assignments

Questions that may not get you a useful answer	Preferable alternatives
I don’t get it. Can you explain this more? or What do you want us to do?	I see that we are comparing and contrasting these two cases. What should be our focus? Their causes? Their impacts? Their implications? All of those things? or I’m unfamiliar with how art historians analyze a painting. Could you say more about what questions I should have in mind to do this kind of analysis? (Note: be specific with your questions.)
How many sources do we have to cite?	Is there a typical range for the number of sources a well written paper would cite for this assignment? or Could you say more about what the sources are for? Is it more that we’re analyzing these texts in this paper, or are we using these texts to analyze some other case?
What do I have to do to get an 'A' on this paper?	Could I meet with you to get feedback on my (pre-prepared) plans/outline/thesis/draft? or I’m not sure how to approach this assignment. Are there any good examples or resources you could point me to?

Three Common Types of College Writing Assignments

From our experience, you are likely to get three kinds of writing assignments based upon the instructor’s degree of direction for the assignment. We’ll take a brief look at each kind of academic writing task.

The Closed Writing Assignment

- Does your advertisement employ techniques of propaganda, and if so what kind?
- Was the South justified in seceding from the Union?
- Was Hitler evil or just mad?

These kinds of writing assignments present you with two counter claims and ask you to determine from your own analysis the more valid claim. They resemble yes-no questions. These topics define the claim for you, so the major task of the writing assignment then is working out the support for the claim. They resemble a math problem in which the teacher has given you the answer and now wants you to “show your work” in arriving at that answer. Be careful with these writing assignments, however, because often these topics don’t have a simple yes/no, either/or answer (despite the nature of the essay question). A close analysis of the subject matter often reveals nuances and ambiguities within the question that your eventual claim should reflect. Perhaps a claim such as, “In my opinion, Hitler was mad” might work, but I urge you to avoid such a simplistic thesis. This thesis would be better: “I believe Hitler's unhinged mind borders on insanity but doesn’t quite reach it.”

The Semi-Open Writing Assignment

- Discuss the role of law in Antigone.

- Show how the Fugitive Slave Act influenced the Abolitionist Movement.

Although these topics chart out a subject matter for you to write about, they don't offer up claims you can easily use in your paper. It would be a misstep to offer up claims such as, "Law plays a role in Antigone." Such statements express the obvious and what the topic takes for granted. The question, for example, is not whether law plays a role in Antigone, but rather what sort of role law plays. What is the nature of this role? What influences does it have on the characters or actions or theme? This kind of writing assignment resembles a kind of archeological dig. The teacher cordons off an area, hands you a shovel, and says dig here and see what you find. Be sure to avoid summary and mere explanation in this kind of assignment. Despite using key words in the assignment such as "explain," "illustrate," analyze," "discuss," or "show how," these topics still ask you to make an argument. Implicit in the topic is the expectation that you will analyze the reading and arrive at some insights into patterns and relationships about the subject. Your eventual paper, then, needs to present what you found from this analysis—the treasure you found from your digging. Determining your own claim represents the biggest challenge for this type of writing assignment.

The Open Writing Assignment

- What does it mean to be an "American" in the 21st Century?
- Analyze the influence of slavery upon one cause of the Civil War.

These kinds of writing assignments require you to decide both your writing topic and your claim (or thesis). Which character in the Inferno will I pick to analyze? What two themes in Pride and Prejudice will I choose to write about? Many students struggle with these types of assignments because they have to understand their subject matter well before they can intelligently choose a topic. For instance, you need a good familiarity with the characters in The Inferno before you can pick one. You have to have a solid understanding defining elements of American identity as well as 21st century culture before you can begin to connect them. This kind of writing assignment resembles riding a bike without the training wheels on. It says, "You decide what to write about." The biggest decision, then, becomes selecting your topic and limiting it to a manageable size.

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Rubrics as Road Maps

If a professor provides a grading rubric with an assignment prompt, thank your lucky stars (and your professor). If the professor took the trouble to prepare and distribute it, you can be sure that he or she will use it to grade your paper. He or she may not go over it in class, but it's the clearest possible statement of what the professor is looking for in the paper. If it's wordy, it may seem like those online "terms and conditions" that we routinely accept without reading. But you really should read it over carefully before you begin and again as your work progresses. A lot of rubrics do have some useful specifics. Ours, for example, often contain phrases like "makes at least six error-free connections to concepts or ideas from the course," or "gives thorough consideration to at least one plausible counter-argument." Even less specific criteria (such as "incorporates course concepts" and "considers counter-arguments") will tell you how you should be spending your writing time.

Even the best rubrics aren't completely transparent. They simply can't be. Take, for example, this AAC&U rubric. It has been drafted and repeatedly revised by a multidisciplinary expert panel and tested multiple times on sample student work to ensure reliability. But it is still seems kind of vague. What is the real difference between "demonstrating a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose" and "demonstrating adequate consideration" of the same? It depends on the specific context. So how can you know whether you've done that? A big part of what you're learning, through feedback from your professors, is to judge the quality of your writing for yourself. Your future managers are counting on that. At this point, it is better to think of rubrics as roadmaps, displaying your destination, rather than a GPS system directing every move you make.

Behind any rubric is the essential goal of higher education: helping you take charge of your own learning, which means writing like an independently motivated scholar. Are you tasked with proposing a research paper topic? Don't just tell the professor what you want to do, convince him or her of the salience of your topic, as if you were a scholar seeking grant money. Is it a reflection paper? Then outline both the insights you've gained and the intriguing questions that remain, as a scholar would. Are you writing a thesis-driven analytical paper? Then apply the concepts you've learned to a new problem or situation. Write as if your scholarly peers around the country are eagerly awaiting your unique insights. Descriptors like "thoroughness" or "mastery" or "detailed attention" convey the vision of student writers making the time and rigorous mental effort to offer something new to the ongoing, multi-stranded academic conversation. What your professor wants, in short, is critical thinking.

Critical Thinking in the College Essay Assignments

What's critical about critical thinking? Why do college professors gravitate towards essay assignments that encourage critical thinking?

Critical thinking is one of those terms that has been used so often and in so many different ways that if often seems meaningless. It also makes one wonder, is there such a thing as uncritical thinking? If you aren't thinking critically, then are you even thinking?

Despite the prevalent ambiguities, critical thinking actually does mean something. The Association of American Colleges and Universities usefully defines it as "a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion."[6]

That definition aligns with the best description of critical thinking I ever heard; it came from junior high art teacher, Joe Bolger.[7] He once asked, "What color is the ceiling?" In that withering 'tween tone, we reluctantly replied, "Whiiiite." He then asked, "What color is it really?" We deigned to aim our pre-adolescent eyes upwards, and eventually began to offer more accurate answers: "Ivory?" "Yellow-ish tan." "It's grey in that corner." After finally getting a few thoughtful responses, Mr. Bolger said something like, "Making good art is about drawing what you see, not what you think you're supposed to see." The AAC&U definition, above, essentially amounts to the same thing: taking a good look and deciding what you *really* think rather than relying on the first idea or assumption that comes to mind.

The critical thinking rubric produced by the AAC&U describes the relevant activities of critical thinking in more detail. To think critically, one must …

a. "clearly state and comprehensively describe the issue or problem,"
b. "independently interpret and evaluate sources,"
c. "thoroughly analyze assumptions behind and context of your own or others' ideas,"
d. "argue a complex position and one that takes counter-arguments into account," and
e. "arrive at logical and well informed conclusions".[8]

While you are probably used to providing some evidence for your claims, you can see that college-level expectations go quite a bit further. When professors assign an analytical paper, they don't just want you to formulate a plausible-sounding argument. They want you to dig into the evidence, think hard about unspoken assumptions and the influence of context, and then explain what you really think and why.

Interestingly, the AAC&U defines critical thinking as a "habit of mind" rather than a discrete achievement. And there are at least two reasons to see critical thinking as a craft or art to pursue rather than a task to check off. First, the more you think critically, the better you get at it. As you get more and more practice in closely examining claims, their underlying logic, and alternative perspectives on the issue, it'll begin to feel automatic. You'll no longer make or accept claims that begin with "Everyone knows that …" or end with "That's just human nature." Second, just as artists and crafts persons hone their skills over a lifetime, learners continually expand their critical thinking capacities, both through the feedback they receive from others and from their own

reflections. Artists of all kinds find satisfaction in continually seeking greater challenges. Continual reflection and improvement is part of the craft.

This comment about critical thinking was provided by student, Aly Button: "As soon as I see the phrase 'critical thinking,' the first thing I think is more work. It always sounds as if you're going to have to think harder and longer. But I think the AAC&U's definition is on point; critical thinking is a habit. Seeing that phrase shouldn't be a scary thing because by this point in many people's college career this is an automatic response. I never expect an answer to a question to be in the text; by now I realize that my professors want to know what I have to say about something or what I have learned. In a paper or essay, the three-step thesis process is a tool that will help you get this information across. While you're doing the hard work (the thinking part), this formula offers you a way to clearly state your position on a subject. It's as simple as: make a general statement, make an arguable statement, and finally, say why it is important. This is my rule of thumb, and I would not want to start a thesis-driven paper any other way!

Critical thinking is hard work. Even those who actively choose to do it experience it as tedious, difficult, and sometimes surprisingly emotional. Nobel-prize winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman explains that our brains aren't designed to think; rather, they're designed to save us from having to think.[9] Our brains are great at developing routines and repertoires that enable us to accomplish fairly complex tasks like driving cars, choosing groceries, and having a conversation without thinking consciously and thoroughly about every move we make. Kahneman calls this "fast thinking." "Slow thinking," which is deliberate and painstaking, is something our brains seek to avoid. That built-in tendency can lead us astray. Kahneman and his colleagues often used problems like this one in experiments to gauge how people used fast and slow thinking in different contexts:

> A bat and ball cost $1.10.
>
> The bat costs one dollar more than the ball.
>
> How much does the ball cost?

Most people automatically say the ball costs $0.10. However, if the bat costs $1 more, than the bat would cost $1.10 leading to the incorrect total of $1.20. The ball costs $0.05. Kahneman notes, "Many thousands of university students have answered the bat-and-ball puzzle, and the results are shocking. More than 50% of students at Harvard, MIT, and Princeton gave the intuitive—incorrect—answer." These and other results confirm that "many people are overconfident, prone to place too much faith in their intuitions." Thinking critically—thoroughly questioning your immediate intuitive responses—is difficult work, but every organization and business in the world needs people who can do that effectively. Some students assume that an unpleasant critical thinking experience means that they're either doing something wrong or that it's an inherently uninteresting (and oppressive) activity. While we all relish those times when we're pleasantly absorbed in a complex activity (what psychologist Mihaly Czikszentmihalyi calls "flow"[12]), the more tedious experiences can also bring satisfaction, sort of like a good work-out.

Critical thinking can also be emotionally challenging, researchers have found. Facing a new realm of uncertainty and contradiction without relying on familiar assumptions is inherently anxiety-provoking because when you're doing it, you are, by definition, incompetent. Recent research has highlighted that both children and adults need to be able to regulate their own emotions in order to cope with the challenges of building competence in a new area.[13] The kind of critical thinking your professors are looking for—that is, pursuing a comprehensive, multi-faceted exploration in order to arrive at an arguable, nuanced argument—is inevitably a struggle and it may be an emotional one. Your best bet is to find ways to make those processes as efficient, pleasant, and effective as you can.

Kaethe Leonard, another student, says: "The thing no one tells you when you get to college is that critical thinking papers are professors' favorites. College is all about learning how to think individual thoughts so you'll have to do quite a few of them. Have no fear though; they do get easier with time. The first step? Think about what you want to focus on in the paper (aka your thesis) and go with it.

The demands students face are not at all unique to their academic pursuits. Professional working roles demand critical thinking, as 81% of major employers reported in an AAC&U-commissioned survey[14], and it's pretty easy to imagine how critical thinking helps one make much better decisions in all aspects of life. Embrace it. And just as athletes, artists, and writers sustain their energy and inspiration for hard work by interacting with others who share these passions, look to others in the scholarly community—your professors and fellow students—to keep yourself engaged in these ongoing intellectual challenges. While writing time is often solitary, it's meant to plug you into a vibrant academic community. What your professors want, overall, is for you to join them in asking and pursuing important questions about the natural, social, and creative worlds.

Other Resources

1. This website from the Capital Community College Foundation has some good advice about overcoming writer's block. And student contributor Aly Button recommends this funny clip from SpongeBob Squarepants.
2. The Foundation for Critical Thinking maintains a website with many useful articles and tools.
3. The Online Writing Laboratory (OWL) at Purdue University is a wonderful set of resources for every aspect of college writing. Especially germane to this chapter is this summary of the most common types of writing assignments.
4. This website, BrainBashers.com, offers logic puzzles and other brain-teasers for your entertainment.

Exercise 1

1. Free-write on an assignment prompt. If you have one, do that one. If not, here's one to practice with: A. "Please write a five-page paper analyzing the controversy surrounding genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the food supply." B. What clarification questions would you like to ask your professor? What additional background knowledge do you need to deeply understand the topic? What are some starter ideas that could lead to a good thesis and intriguing argument?
2. Find a couple of sample student papers from online paper mills such as this one (Google "free college papers") and journals featuring excellent undergraduate writing (such as this one from Cornell University), and use the *AAC&U rubric on critical thinking* to evaluate them. Which descriptor in each row most closely fits the paper?

Video

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

Video 4.3.1

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4.4: Argument

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Argument

Making a claim

What is an argument? In academic writing, an argument is usually a main idea, often called a “claim” or “thesis statement,” backed up with evidence that supports the idea. In the majority of college papers, you will need to make some sort of claim and use evidence to support it, and your ability to do this well will separate your papers from those of students who see assignments as mere accumulations of fact and detail. In other words, gone are the happy days of being given a “topic” about which you can write anything. It is time to stake out a position and prove why it is a good position for a thinking person to hold. See this handout on thesis statements.

Claims can be as simple as “Protons are positively charged and electrons are negatively charged,” with evidence such as, “In this experiment, protons and electrons acted in such and such a way.” Claims can also be as complex as “The end of the South African system of apartheid was inevitable,” using reasoning and evidence such as, “Every successful revolution in the modern era has come about after the government in power has given and then removed small concessions to the uprising group.” In either case, the rest of your paper will detail the reasoning and evidence that have led you to believe that your position is best.

When beginning to write a paper, ask yourself, “What is my point?” For example, the point of this handout is to help you become a better writer, and we are arguing that an important step in the process of writing effective arguments is understanding the concept of argumentation. If your papers do not have a main point, they cannot be arguing for anything. Asking yourself what your point is can help you avoid a mere “information dump.” Consider this: your instructors probably know a lot more than you do about your subject matter. Why, then, would you want to provide them with material they already know? **Instructors are usually looking for two things:**

1. Proof that you understand the material
2. A demonstration of your ability to use or apply the material in ways that go beyond what you have read or heard.

This second part can be done in many ways: you can critique the material, apply it to something else, or even just explain it in a different way. In order to succeed at this second step, though, you must have a particular point to argue.

Arguments in academic writing are usually complex and take time to develop. Your argument will need to be more than a simple or obvious statement such as “Frank Lloyd Wright was a great architect.” Such a statement might capture your initial impressions of

Wright as you have studied him in class; however, you need to look deeper and express specifically what caused that "greatness." Your instructor will probably expect something more complicated, such as "Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture combines elements of European modernism, Asian aesthetic form, and locally found materials to create a unique new style," or "There are many strong similarities between Wright's building designs and those of his mother, which suggests that he may have borrowed some of her ideas." To develop your argument, you would then define your terms and prove your claim with evidence from Wright's drawings and buildings and those of the other architects you mentioned.

Evidence

Do not stop with having a point. You have to back up your point with evidence. The strength of your evidence, and your use of it, can make or break your argument. See this handout on evidence. You already have the natural inclination for this type of thinking, if not in an academic setting. Think about how you talked your parents into letting you borrow the family car. Did you present them with lots of instances of your past trustworthiness? Did you make them feel guilty because your friends' parents all let them drive? Did you whine until they just wanted you to shut up? Did you look up statistics on teen driving and use them to show how you didn't fit the dangerous-driver profile? These are all types of argumentation, and they exist in academia in similar forms.

Every field has slightly different requirements for acceptable evidence, so familiarize yourself with some arguments from within that field instead of just applying whatever evidence you like best. Pay attention to your textbooks and your instructor's lectures. What types of argument and evidence are they using? The type of evidence that sways an English instructor may not work to convince a sociology instructor. Find out what counts as proof that something is true in that field. Is it statistics, a logical development of points, something from the object being discussed (art work, text, culture, or atom), the way something works, or some combination of more than one of these things?

Be consistent with your evidence. Unlike negotiating for the use of your parents' car, a college paper is not the place for an all-out blitz of every type of argument. You can often use more than one type of evidence within a paper, but make sure that within each section you are providing the reader with evidence appropriate to each claim. So, if you start a paragraph or section with a statement like "Putting the student seating area closer to the basketball court will raise player performance," do not follow with your evidence on how much more money the university could raise by letting more students go to games for free. Information about how fan support raises player morale, which then results in better play, would be a better follow-up. Your next section could offer clear reasons why undergraduates have as much or more right to attend an undergraduate event as wealthy alumni—but this information would not go in the same section as the fan support information. You cannot convince a confused person, so keep things tidy and ordered.

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Counter-argument

One way to strengthen your argument and show that you have a deep understanding of the issue you are discussing is to

anticipate and address counter-arguments or objections. By considering what someone who disagrees with your position might have to say about your argument, you show that you have thought things through, and you dispose of some of the reasons your audience might have for not accepting your argument. Recall our discussion of student seating in the Dean Dome. To make the most effective argument possible, you should consider not only what students would say about seating but also what alumni who have paid a lot to get good seats might say.

You can generate counter-arguments by asking yourself how someone who disagrees with you might respond to each of the points you've made or your position as a whole. **If you can't immediately imagine another position, here are some strategies to try:**

- Do some research. It may seem to you that no one could possibly disagree with the position you are arguing, but someone probably has. For example, some people argue that the American Civil War never ended. If you are making an argument concerning, for example, the outcomes of the Civil War, you might wish to see what some of these people have to say.
- Talk with a friend or with your teacher. Another person may be able to imagine counter-arguments that haven't occurred to you.
- Consider your conclusion or claim and the premises of your argument and imagine someone who denies each of them. For example, if you argued, "Cats make the best pets. This is because they are clean and independent," you might imagine someone saying, "Cats do not make the best pets. They are dirty and needy."

Once you have thought up some counter-arguments, consider how you will respond to them—will you concede that your opponent has a point but explain why your audience should nonetheless accept your argument? Will you reject the counter-argument and explain why it is mistaken? Either way, you will want to leave your reader with a sense that your argument is stronger than opposing arguments.

When you are summarizing opposing arguments, be charitable. Present each argument fairly and objectively, rather than trying to make it look foolish. You want to show that you have considered the many sides of the issue. If you simply attack or caricature your opponent (also referred to as presenting a "straw man"), you suggest that your argument is only capable of defeating an extremely weak adversary, which may undermine your argument rather than enhance it.

It is usually better to consider one or two serious counter-arguments in some depth, rather than to give a long but superficial list of many different counter-arguments and replies.

Be sure that your reply is consistent with your original argument. If considering a counter-argument changes your position, you will need to go back and revise your original argument accordingly.

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Audience

Audience is a very important consideration in argument. Take a look at this handout on audience. A lifetime of dealing with your family members has helped you figure out which arguments work best to persuade each of them. Maybe whining works with one parent, but the other will only accept cold, hard statistics. Your kid brother may listen only to the sound of money in his palm. It's usually wise to think of your audience in an academic setting as someone who is perfectly smart but who doesn't necessarily agree with you. You are not just expressing your opinion in an argument ("It's true because I said so"), and in most cases your audience will know something about the subject at hand—so you will need sturdy proof. At the same time, do not think of your audience as capable of reading your mind. You have to come out and state both your claim and your evidence clearly. Do not assume that because the instructor knows the material, he or she understands what part of it you are using, what you think about it, and why you have taken the position you've chosen.

Critical reading

Critical reading is a big part of understanding argument. Although some of the material you read will be very persuasive, do not fall under the spell of the printed word as authority. Very few of your instructors think of the texts they assign as the last word on the subject. Remember that the author of every text has an agenda, something that he or she wants you to believe. This is OK—everything is written from someone's perspective—but it's a good thing to be aware of. For more information on objectivity and bias and on reading sources carefully, read our handouts on evaluating print sources and reading to write.

Take notes either in the margins of your source (if you are using a photocopy or your own book) or on a separate sheet as you read. Put away that highlighter! Simply highlighting a text is good for memorizing the main ideas in that text—it does not encourage critical reading. Part of your goal as a reader should be to put the author's ideas in your own words. Then you can stop thinking of these ideas as facts and start thinking of them as arguments.

When you read, ask yourself questions like "What is the author trying to prove?" and "What is the author assuming I will agree with?" Do you agree with the author? Does the author adequately defend her argument? What kind of proof does she use? Is there something she leaves out that you would put in? Does putting it in hurt her argument? As you get used to reading critically, you will start to see the sometimes hidden agendas of other writers, and you can use this skill to improve your own ability to craft effective arguments.

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4.5: Purpose, Tone, Audience, Content in an Assignment

Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content

Imagine reading one long block of text, with each idea blurring into the next. Even if you are reading a thrilling novel or an interesting news article, you will likely lose interest in what the author has to say very quickly. During the writing process, it is helpful to position yourself as a reader. Ask yourself whether you can focus easily on each point you make. One technique that effective writers use is to begin a fresh paragraph for each new idea they introduce. Paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks. One paragraph focuses on only one main idea and presents coherent sentences to support that one point. Because all the sentences in one paragraph support the same point, a paragraph may stand on its own. To create longer assignments and to discuss more than one point, writers group together paragraphs. Just like a piece of writing as a whole (see rhetorical analysis), three elements shape the content of each paragraph:

1. **Purpose.** The reason the writer composes the paragraph.
2. **Tone.** The attitude the writer conveys about the paragraph's subject.
3. **Audience.** The individual or group whom the writer intends to address.

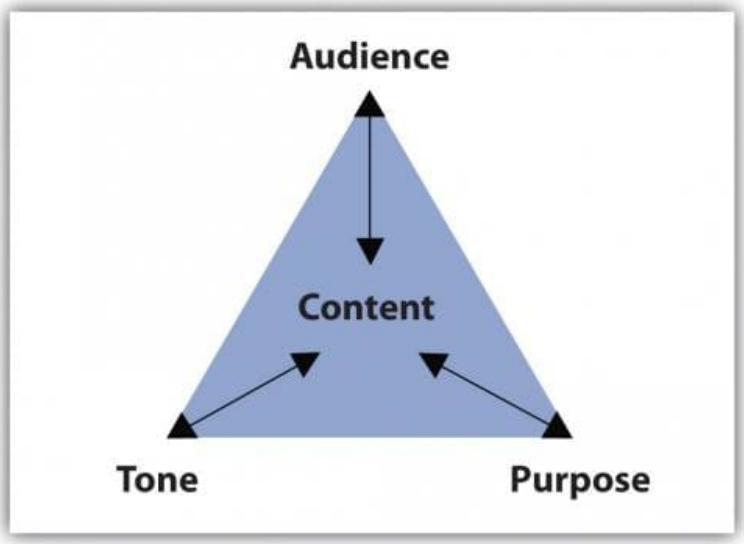

Figure: Amazon.

The assignment's purpose, audience, and tone dictate what the paragraph covers and how it will support one main point. This section covers how purpose, audience, and tone affect reading and writing paragraphs.

Identifying Common Academic Purposes

The purpose for a piece of writing identifies the reason you write a particular document. Basically, the purpose of a piece of writing answers the question "Why?" For example, why write a play? To entertain a packed theater. Why write instructions to the babysitter? To inform them of your schedule and rules. Why write a letter to your congressman? To persuade him to address your community's needs. In academic settings, the reasons for writing fulfill four main purposes: to summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate.

Identifying the Audience

Although the audience for writing assignments—your readers—may not appear in person, they play an equally vital role as does the audience of a play. Even in everyday writing activities, you identify your readers' characteristics, interests, and expectations before making decisions about what you write. In fact, thinking about audience has become so common that you may not even

detect the audience-driven decisions. For example, you update your status on a social networking site with the awareness of who will digitally follow the post. If you want to brag about a good grade, you may write the post to please family members. If you want to describe a funny moment, you may write with your friends' senses of humor in mind. Even at work, you send e-mails with an awareness of an unintended receiver who could intercept the message. In other words, being aware of "invisible" readers is a skill you most likely already possess and one you rely on every day.

Selecting an Appropriate Tone

Tone identifies a speaker's attitude toward a subject or another person. You may pick up a person's tone of voice fairly easily in conversation. A friend who tells you about her weekend may speak excitedly about a fun skiing trip. An instructor who means business may speak in a low, slow voice to emphasize her serious mood. Or, a coworker who needs to let off some steam after a long meeting may crack a sarcastic joke. Just as speakers transmit emotion through voice, writers can transmit through writing a range of attitudes, from excited and humorous to somber and critical. These emotions create connections among the audience, the author, and the subject, ultimately building a relationship between the audience and the text. To stimulate these connections, writers imply their attitudes and feelings with useful devices, such as sentence structure, word choice, punctuation, and formal or informal language. Keep in mind that the writer's attitude should always appropriately match the audience and the purpose. Read the following paragraph and consider the writer's tone. How would you describe the writer's attitude toward wildlife conservation?

> Many species of plants and animals are disappearing right before our eyes. If we don't act fast, it might be too late to save them. Human activities, including pollution, deforestation, hunting, and overpopulation, are devastating the natural environment. Without our help, many species will not survive long enough for our children to see them in the wild. Take the tiger, for example. Today, tigers occupy just 7 percent of their historical range, and many local populations are already extinct. Hunted for their beautiful pelt and other body parts, the tiger population has plummeted from one hundred thousand in 1920 to just a few thousand. Contact your local wildlife conservation society today to find out how you can stop this terrible destruction.

Here, the writer's tone is one of urgency and conveys a call to action. The urgent tone, combined with specific details, makes it more likely that a reader will take action than would a piece of writing that simply gave the facts and did not provide a sense of urgency.

Choosing Appropriate, Interesting Content

Content refers to all the written substance in a document. After selecting an audience and a purpose, you must choose what information will make it to the page. Content may consist of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations, but no matter the type, the information must be appropriate and interesting for the audience and purpose. An essay written for third graders that summarizes the legislative process, for example, would have to contain succinct and simple content. Content is also shaped by tone. When the tone matches the content, the audience will be more engaged, and you will build a stronger relationship with your readers. Consider that audience of third graders. You would choose simple content that the audience will easily understand, and you would express that content through an enthusiastic tone. The same considerations apply to all audiences and purposes.

Exercise 1

Match the content in the box to the appropriate audience and purpose. On your own sheet of paper, write the correct letter next to the number.

1. Whereas economist Holmes contends that the financial crisis is far from over, the presidential advisor Jones points out that it is vital to catch the first wave of opportunity to increase market share. We can use elements of both experts' visions. Let me explain how.
2. In 2000, foreign money flowed into the United States, contributing to easy credit conditions. People bought larger houses than they could afford, eventually defaulting on their loans as interest rates rose.
3. The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, known by most of us as the humongous government bailout, caused mixed reactions. Although supported by many political leaders, the statute provoked outrage among grassroots groups. In their opinion, the government was actually rewarding banks for their appalling behavior.

1. Audience: An instructor
    1. Purpose: To analyze the reasons behind the 2007 financial crisis

    2. Content:
2. Audience: Classmates
    1. Purpose: To summarize the effects of the $700 billion government bailout
    2. Content:
3. Audience: An employer
    1. Purpose: To synthesize two articles on preparing businesses for economic recovery
    2. Content:

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

Exercise 2

Using the assignment, purpose, audience, and tone from Exercise 1, generate a list of content ideas. Remember that content consists of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations.

My assignment:

My purpose:

My audience:

My tone:

My content ideas:

Managing Your Time

In the first chapter you learned general time-management skills. By combining those skills with what you have learned about the writing process, you can make any writing assignment easier to manage.

When your instructor gives you a writing assignment, write the due date on your calendar. Then work backward from the due date to set aside blocks of time when you will work on the assignment. Always plan at least two sessions of writing time per assignment, so that you are not trying to move from step 1 to step 5 in one evening. Trying to work that fast is stressful, and it does not yield great results. You will plan better, think better, and write better if you space out the steps.

Ideally, you should set aside at least three separate blocks of time to work on a writing assignment: one for prewriting and outlining, one for drafting, and one for revising and editing. Depending on your writing pace and the amount of research you need to do, it may take more. Sometimes those steps may be compressed into just a few days. If you have a couple of weeks to work on a paper, space out the five steps over multiple sessions. Long-term projects, such as research papers, require more time for each step.

Tip:

In certain situations you may not be able to allow time between the different steps of the writing process. For instance, you may be asked to write in class or complete a brief response paper overnight. If the time available is very limited, apply a modified version of the writing process (as you would do for an essay exam). It is still important to give the assignment thought and effort. However, these types of assignments are less formal, and instructors may not expect them to be as polished as formal papers. When in doubt, ask the instructor about expectations, resources that will be available during the writing exam, and if they have any tips to prepare you to effectively demonstrate your writing skills.

Each Monday in Neil's Foundations of Education class, the instructor distributed copies of a current news article on education and assigned students to write a one-and-one-half- to two-page response that was due the following Monday. Together, these weekly assignments counted for 20 percent of the course grade. Although each response took just a few hours to complete, Neil found that he learned more from the reading and got better grades on his writing if he spread the work out as shown in Table 4.5.1.

Table 4.5.1 -- Time-Planning Example

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Article response assigned		Read article, pre-write, and outline response paper		Draft response		Revise and edit response

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4.6: Prewriting Strategies

If you think that a blank sheet of paper or a blinking cursor on the computer screen is a scary sight, you are not alone. Many writers, students, and employees find that beginning to write can be intimidating. When faced with a blank page, however, experienced writers remind themselves that writing, like other everyday activities, is a process. Every process, from writing to cooking, bike riding, and learning to use a new cell phone, will get significantly easier with practice.

Just as you need a recipe, ingredients, and proper tools to cook a delicious meal, you also need a plan, resources, and adequate time to create a good written composition. In other words, writing is a process that requires following steps and using strategies to accomplish your goals.

These are the five steps in the writing process:

1. Prewriting
2. Outlining the structure of ideas
3. Writing a rough draft
4. Revising
5. Editing

Effective writing can be simply described as good ideas that are expressed well and arranged in the proper order. This chapter will give you the chance to work on all these important aspects of writing. Although many more prewriting strategies exist, this chapter covers six: using experience and observations, free writing, asking questions, brainstorming, mapping, and searching the Internet. Using the strategies in this chapter can help you overcome the fear of the blank page and confidently begin the writing process.

Prewriting

Prewriting means just what it says—it's the writing that occurs before you actually write a draft. Richard Nordquist writes that:

"In composition, the term *prewriting* refers to any activity that helps a writer think about a topic, determine a purpose, analyze an audience, and prepare to write. Prewriting is closely related to the *art of invention* in classical rhetoric."

'The objective of prewriting,' according to Roger Caswell and Brenda Mahler, 'is to prepare students for writing by allowing them to discover what they know and what else they need to know. Prewriting invites exploration and promotes the motivation to write' (*Strategies for Teaching Writing*, 2004)." [1]

In order to explore and identify what might be fruitful ideas for writing, I tend to jot concepts, phrases, and notes to myself. Sometimes I draw linkages to connect related ideas. Other writers tend to just write in order to explore and identify patterns of thought. Still other writers list out all of the concepts and information they can think of around a certain topic, and then narrow and refine their lists. Visual thinkers may draw a mind map or other pictures. Others start writing a really "drafty draft" of an essay, and then circle back into prewriting strategies to develop ideas. Any prewriting strategy is fine, depending on "how your mind thinks" and how you like to discover and explore ideas.

Prewriting is the stage of the writing process during which you transfer your abstract thoughts into more concrete ideas in ink on paper (or in type on a computer screen). Although prewriting techniques can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, the following four strategies are best used when initially deciding on a topic:

1. Using experience and observations
2. Reading
3. Free writing
4. Asking questions

At this stage in the writing process, it is okay if you choose a general topic. Later you will learn more prewriting strategies that will narrow the focus of the topic.

Choosing a Topic

In addition to understanding that writing is a process, writers also understand that choosing a good general topic for an assignment is an essential step. Sometimes your instructor will give you an idea to begin an assignment, and other times your instructor will ask you to come up with a topic on your own. A good topic not only covers what an assignment will be about but also fits the assignment's purpose and its audience.

On this page, you will follow a writer named Mariah as she prepares a piece of writing. You will also be planning one of your own. The first important step is for you to tell yourself why you are writing (to inform, to explain, or some other purpose) and for whom you are writing. Write your purpose and your audience on your own sheet of paper, and keep the paper close by as you read and complete exercises in this chapter.

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

Using Experience and Observations

When selecting a topic, you may also want to consider something that interests you or something based on your own life and personal experiences. Even everyday observations can lead to interesting topics. After writers think about their experiences and observations, they often take notes on paper to better develop their thoughts. These notes help writers discover what they have to say about their topic.

> **Tip**
>
> Have you seen an attention-grabbing story on your local news channel? Many current issues appear on television, in magazines, and on the Internet. These can all provide inspiration for your writing.

Reading

Reading plays a vital role in all the stages of the writing process, but it first figures in the development of ideas and topics. Different kinds of documents can help you choose a topic and also develop that topic. For example, a magazine advertising the latest research on the threat of global warming may catch your eye in the supermarket. This cover may interest you, and you may consider global warming as a topic. Or maybe a novel's courtroom drama sparks your curiosity of a particular lawsuit or legal controversy.

After you choose a topic, critical reading is essential to the development of a topic. While reading almost any document, you evaluate the author's point of view by thinking about his main idea and his support. When you judge the author's argument, you discover more about not only the author's opinion but also your own. If this step already seems daunting, remember that even the best writers need to use prewriting strategies to generate ideas.

> **Tip**
>
> The steps in the writing process may seem time consuming at first, but following these steps will save you time in the future. The more you plan in the beginning by reading and using prewriting strategies, the less time you may spend writing and editing later because your ideas will develop more swiftly.

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

Free writing

Free writing is an exercise in which you write freely about any topic for a set amount of time (usually three to five minutes). During

the time limit, you may jot down any thoughts that come to your mind. Try not to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Instead, write as quickly as you can without stopping. If you get stuck, just copy the same word or phrase over and over until you come up with a new thought.

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

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

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

Tip

Some prewriting strategies can be used together. For example, you could use experience and observations to come up with a topic related to your course studies. Then you could use freewriting to describe your topic in more detail and figure out what you have to say about it.

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

Exercise 1

Free write about one event you have recently experienced. With this event in mind, write without stopping for five minutes. After you finish, read over what you wrote. Does anything stand out to you as a good general topic to write about?

Asking Questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? In everyday situations, you pose these kinds of questions to get more information. Who will be my partner for the project? When is the next meeting? Why is my car making that odd noise? Even the title of this chapter begins with the question "How do I begin?"

You seek the answers to these questions to gain knowledge, to better understand your daily experiences, and to plan for the future. Asking these types of questions will also help you with the writing process. As you choose your topic, answering these

questions can help you revisit the ideas you already have and generate new ways to think about your topic. You may also discover aspects of the topic that are unfamiliar to you and that you would like to learn more about. All these idea-gathering techniques will help you plan for future work on your assignment.

When Mariah reread her free writing notes, she found she had rambled and her thoughts were disjointed. She realized that the topic that interested her most was the one she started with, the media. She then decided to explore that topic by asking herself questions about it. Her purpose was to refine media into a topic she felt comfortable writing about. To see how asking questions can help you choose a topic, take a look at the following chart that Mariah completed to record her questions and answers. She asked herself the questions that reporters and journalists use to gather information for their stories. The questions are often called the 5WH questions, after their initial letters.

Questions	Answers
Who?	I use media. Students, teachers, parents, employers and employees-almost everyone uses media.
What?	The media can be a lot of things. Television, radio, e-mail (I think), newspapers, magazines, books.
Where?	The media is almost everywhere now. It's in homes, at work, in cars, even on cell phones!
When?	Media has been around for a long time, but seems a lot more important now.
Why?	Hmm. This is a good question. I don't know why there is mass media. Maybe we have it because we have the technology now. Or people live far away from their families and they have to stay in touch.
How?	Well, media is possible because of the technology inventions, but I don't know how they all work!

Tip

Prewriting is very purpose driven; it does not follow a set of hard-and-fast rules. The purpose of prewriting is to find and explore ideas so that you will be prepared to write. A prewriting technique like asking questions can help you both find a topic and explore it. The key to effective prewriting is to use the techniques that work best for your thinking process. Free writing may not seem to fit your thinking process, but keep an open mind. It may work better than you think. Perhaps brainstorming a list of topics might better fit your personal style. Mariah found free writing and asking questions to be fruitful strategies to use. In your own prewriting, use the 5WH questions in any way that benefits your planning.

Exercise 2

Choose a general topic idea from the prewriting you completed in Exercise 1. Then read each question and use your own paper to answer the 5WH questions. As with Mariah when she explored her writing topic for more detail, it is okay if you do not know all the answers. If you do not know an answer, use your own opinion to speculate, or guess. You may also use factual information from books or articles you previously read on your topic. Later in the chapter, you will read about additional ways (like searching the Internet) to answer your questions and explore your guesses.

5WH Questions

1. Who?

   _____

2. What?

   _____

3. Where?

   _____

4. When?

   _____

5. Why?

   _____

6. How?

   _____

Now that you have completed some of the prewriting exercises, you may feel less anxious about starting a paper from scratch. With some ideas down on paper (or saved on a computer), writers are often more comfortable continuing the writing process. After identifying a good general topic, you, too, are ready to continue the process.

Exercise 3

Write your general topic on your own sheet of paper, under where you recorded your purpose and audience. Choose it from among the topics you listed or explored during the prewriting you have done so far. Make sure it is one you feel comfortable with and feel capable of writing about.

My general topic: _____

Tip

You may find that you need to adjust your topic as you move through the writing stages (and as you complete the exercises in this chapter). If the topic you have chosen is not working, you can repeat the prewriting activities until you find a better one.

More Prewriting Techniques

The prewriting techniques of free writing and asking questions helped Mariah think more about her topic, but the following prewriting strategies can help her (and you) narrow the focus of the topic:

- Brainstorming
- Idea mapping
- Searching the Internet

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

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

Brainstorming

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

The following image is Mariah's brainstorming list:

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

Writing at Work

Figure:

Imagine you have to write an e-mail to your current boss explaining your prior work experience, but you do not know where to start. Before you begin the e-mail, you can use the brainstorming technique to generate a list of employers, duties, and responsibilities that fall under the general topic “work experience.”

Idea Mapping

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

To create an idea map, start with your general topic in a circle in the center of a blank sheet of paper. Then write specific ideas around it and use lines or arrows to connect them together. Add and cluster as many ideas as you can think of.

In addition to brainstorming, Mariah tried idea mapping. Review the following idea map that Mariah created:

Image from @api.

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

From this idea map, Mariah saw she could consider narrowing the focus of her mass media topic to the more specific topic of music piracy.

Searching the Internet

Using search engines on the Internet is a good way to see what kinds of websites are available on your topic. Writers use search engines not only to understand more about the topic's specific issues but also to get better acquainted with their audience.

> **Tip**
>
> Look back at the chart you completed in Exercise 2. Did you guess at any of the answers? Searching the Internet may help you find answers to your questions and confirm your guesses. Be choosy about the websites you use. Make sure they are reliable sources for the kind of information you seek.

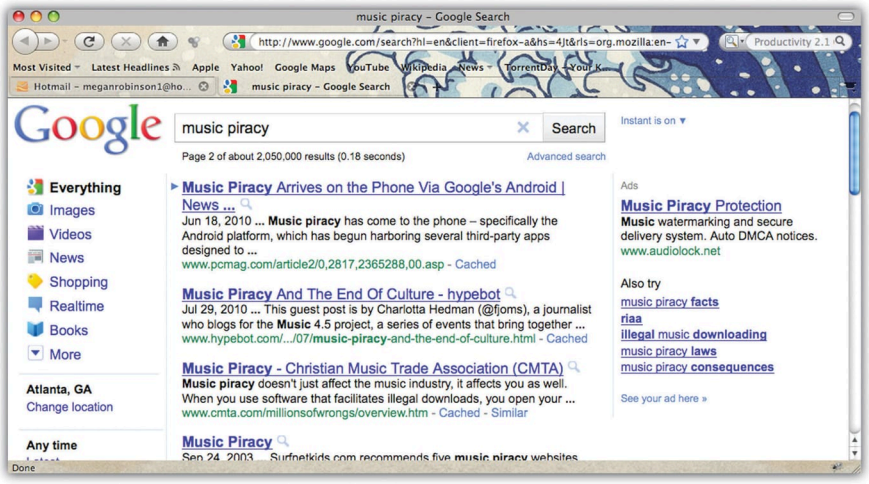
When you search the Internet, type some key words from your broad topic or words from your narrowed focus into your browser's search engine (many good general and specialized search engines are available for you to try). Then look over the results for relevant and interesting articles.

Results from an Internet search show writers the following information:

- Who is talking about the topic
- How the topic is being discussed
- What specific points are currently being discussed about the topic

> **Tip**
>
> If the search engine results are not what you are looking for, revise your key words and search again. Some search engines also offer suggestions for related searches that may give you better results.

Mariah typed the words *music piracy* from her idea map into the search engine, Google. The search engine provided her with the following results:



Retrieved from
http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&client=firefox-a&hs=4Jt&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&q=music+piracy&start=10&sa=N!>

Image from @api.

Not all the results online search engines return will be useful or reliable. Give careful consideration to the reliability of an online source before selecting a topic based on it. Remember that factual information can be verified in other sources, both online and in print. If you have doubts about any information you find, either do not use it or identify it as potentially unreliable.

The results from Mariah's search included websites from university publications, personal blogs, online news sources, and lots of legal cases sponsored by the recording industry. Reading legal jargon made Mariah uncomfortable with the results, so she decided to look further. Reviewing her map, she realized that she was more interested in consumer aspects of mass media, so she refocused her search to media technology and the sometimes confusing array of expensive products that fill electronics stores. Now, Mariah considers a paper topic on the products that have fed the mass media boom in everyday lives.

Exercise 4

In Exercise 2, you chose a possible topic and explored it by answering questions about it using the 5WH questions. However, this topic may still be too broad. Here, in Exercise 3, choose and complete one of the prewriting strategies to narrow the focus. Use either brainstorming, idea mapping, or searching the Internet.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Share what you found and what interests you about the possible topic(s).

Prewriting strategies are a vital first step in the writing process. First, they help you first choose a broad topic and then they help you narrow the focus of the topic to a more specific idea. An effective topic ensures that you are ready for the next step.

Topic Checklist

The following checklist can help you decide if your narrowed topic is good for your assignment.

- Am I interested in this topic?
- Would my audience be interested?

- Do I have prior knowledge or experience with this topic? If so, would I be comfortable exploring this topic and sharing my experiences?
- Do I want to learn more about this topic?
- Is this topic specific?
- Does it fit the length of the assignment?

With your narrowed focus in mind, answer the bulleted questions in the checklist for developing a good topic. If you can answer "yes" to all the questions, write your topic on the line. If you answer "no" to any of the questions, think about another topic or adjust the one you have and try the prewriting strategies again.

My narrowed topic: _____

Watch this video that covers the basics of prewriting:

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

Video 4.6.1

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4.7: Outlining

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Organizing Your Ideas

Your prewriting activities and readings have helped you gather information for your assignment. The more you sort through the pieces of information you found, the more you will begin to see the connections between them. Patterns and gaps may begin to stand out. But only when you start to organize your ideas will you be able to translate your raw insights into a form that will communicate meaning to your audience.

Simply passing your eyes over an article or textbook chapter one time through is not sufficient to learn the material. Organizing information after you read it is the way to make sure you both *understand* it and *remember* it, whether for class discussion, for a test, or for an essay assignment. With practice, you will learn to organize what you read in ways that best suit your own learning style and the materials you are reading.

How do I do this?

Review your annotations and class notes and find some of the following information that you may need.

- Vocabulary
- Main ideas
- Supporting details
- Information that supports your inferences
- Information you find interesting or important
- Information you find confusing
- Information you could use in your essay

> **Tip**
>
> Longer papers require more reading and planning than shorter papers do. Most writers discover that the more they know about a topic, the more they can write about it with intelligence and interest.

When you write, you need to organize your ideas in an order that makes sense. The writing you complete in all your courses exposes how analytically and critically your mind works. In some courses, the only direct contact you may have with your instructor

is through the assignments you write for the course. You can make a good impression by spending time ordering your ideas.

Order refers to your choice of what to present first, second, third, and so on in your writing. The order you pick closely relates to your purpose for writing that particular assignment. For example, when telling a story, it may be important to first describe the background for the action. Or you may need to first describe a 3-D movie projector or a television studio to help readers visualize the setting and scene. You may want to group your support effectively to convince readers that your point of view on an issue is well reasoned and worthy of belief.

In longer pieces of writing, you may organize different parts in different ways so that your purpose stands out clearly and all parts of the paper work together to consistently develop your main point.

Methods of Organizing Writing

The three common methods of organizing writing are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance. Another common way to order your ideas is background/problem/solution. You need to keep these organizational structures in mind as you plan how to arrange the information you have gathered in an outline. An outline is a written plan that serves as a skeleton for the paragraphs you write. Later, when you draft paragraphs in the next stage of the writing process, you will add support to create “flesh” and “muscle” for your assignment.

When you write, your goal is not only to complete an assignment but also to write for a specific purpose—perhaps to inform, to explain, to persuade, or for a combination of these purposes. Your purpose for writing should always be in the back of your mind because it will help you decide which pieces of information belong together and how you will order them. In other words, choose the order that will most effectively fit your purpose and support your main point.

Table 8.1 “Order versus Purpose” shows the connection between order and purpose.

Table 8.1 Order versus Purpose

Order	P
Chronological Order	To explain the history of an event or a topic
	To tell a story or relate an experience
	To explain how to do or make something
	To explain the steps in a process
Spatial Order	To help readers visualize something as you want them to see it
	To create a main impression using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)
Order of Importance	To persuade or convince
	To rank items by their importance, benefit, or significance
Cause and effect or Problem and solution	To explain the cause or correlation of a couple of things and the effect of that To explain a problem (an effect, and maybe its causes) and provide potential solutions

Chronological Order

Chronological arrangement has the following purposes:

- To explain the history of an event or a topic
- To tell a story or relate an experience
- To explain how to do or to make something
- To explain the steps in a process

Chronological order is mostly used in expository writing, which is a form of writing that narrates, describes, informs, or explains a process. When using chronological order, arrange the events in the order that they actually happened, or will happen if you are giving instructions. This method requires you to use words such as *first*, *second*, *then*, *after that*, *later*, and *finally*. These transition words guide you and your reader through the paper as you expand your thesis.

For example, if you are writing an essay about the history of the airline industry, you would begin with its conception and detail the essential timeline events up until present day. You would follow the chain of events using words such as *first*, *then*, *next*, and so on.

Writing at Work

At some point in your career you may have to file a complaint with your human resources department. Using chronological order is a useful tool in describing the events that led up to your filing the grievance. You would logically lay out the events in the order that they occurred using the key transition words. The more logical your complaint, the more likely you will be well received and helped.

Exercise 1

Choose an accomplishment you have achieved in your life. The important moment could be in sports, schooling, family, or extracurricular activities. On your own sheet of paper, list the steps you took to reach your goal. Try to be as specific as possible with the steps you took. Pay attention to using transition words to focus your writing.

Keep in mind that chronological order is most appropriate for the following purposes:

- Writing essays containing heavy research
- Writing essays with the aim of listing, explaining, or narrating
- Writing essays that analyze literary works such as poems, plays, or books

Tip

When using chronological order, your introduction should indicate the information you will cover and in what order, and the introduction should also establish the relevance of the information. Your body paragraphs should then provide clear divisions or steps in chronology. You can divide your paragraphs by time (such as decades, wars, or other historical events) or by the same structure of the work you are examining (such as a line-by-line explication of a poem).

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph that describes a process you are familiar with and can do well. Assume that your reader is unfamiliar with the procedure. Remember to use the chronological key words, such as *first*, *second*, *then*, and *finally*.

Spatial Order

Spatial order is best used for the following purposes:

- Helping readers visualize something as you want them to see it
- Evoking a scene using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)
- Writing a descriptive essay

Spatial order means that you explain or describe objects as they are arranged around you in your space, for example in a bedroom. As the writer, you create a picture for your reader, and their perspective is the viewpoint from which you describe what is around you.

The view must move in an orderly, logical progression, giving the reader clear directional signals to follow from place to place. The key to using this method is to choose a specific starting point and then guide the reader to follow your eye as it moves in an orderly trajectory from your starting point.

Pay attention to the following student's description of her bedroom and how she guides the reader through the viewing process, foot by foot.

Attached to my bedroom wall is a small wooden rack dangling with red and turquoise necklaces that shimmer as you enter. Just to the right of the rack is my window, framed by billowy white curtains. The peace of such an image is a stark contrast to my desk, which sits to the right of the window, layered in textbooks, crumpled papers, coffee cups, and an overflowing ashtray. Turning my head to the right, I see a set of two bare windows that frame the trees outside the glass like a 3D painting. Below the windows is an oak chest from which blankets and scarves are protruding. Against the wall opposite the billowy curtains is an antique dresser, on top of which sits a jewelry box and a few picture frames. A tall mirror attached to the dresser takes up most of the wall, which is the color of lavender.

This paragraph incorporates both an implied topic sentence and spatial order. Often in a descriptive essay, the two work together.

The following are possible transition words to include when using spatial order:

- Just to the left or just to the right
- Behind
- Between
- On the left or on the right
- Across from
- A little further down
- To the south, to the east, and so on
- A few yards away
- Turning left or turning right

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph using spatial order that describes your commute to work, school, or another location you visit often.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers

Order of Importance

The order of importance is best used for the following purposes:

- Persuading and convincing
- Ranking items by their importance, benefit, or significance
- Illustrating a situation, problem, or solution

Most essays move from the least to the most important point, and the paragraphs are arranged in an effort to build the essay's strength. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to begin with your most important supporting point, such as in an essay that contains a thesis that is highly debatable. Depending on your audience, when writing a persuasive essay, it is best to begin with the most important point because it immediately captivates your readers and compels them to continue reading.

For example, if you were supporting your thesis that homework is detrimental to the education of high school students, you would want to present your most convincing argument first, and then move on to the less important points for your case.

Some key transitional words you should use with this method of organization are *most importantly*, *almost as importantly*, *just as importantly*, and *finally*.

Writing at Work

During your career, you may be required to work on a team that devises a strategy for a specific goal of your company, such as increasing profits. When planning your strategy you should organize your steps in order of importance. This demonstrates the ability to prioritize and plan. Using the order of importance technique also shows that you can create a resolution with logical steps for accomplishing a common goal.

Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph that discusses a passion of yours. Your passion could be music, a particular sport, filmmaking, and so on. Your paragraph should be built upon the reasons why you feel so strongly. Briefly discuss your reasons in the order of least to greatest importance

Cause and Effect

Cause and effect is best used when you:

- Want to explain why a problem occurs, or
- Want to explain a phenomenon (i.e., why tornadoes happen).

It always usually makes sense to discuss and explain the causes before writing about the effects because generally they are chronological in order. Sometimes, however, the logic may be conditional (i.e., under these conditions, this effect occurs). Therefore, when writing about cause and effect, many different logical joiners may be used to indicate the logic. Please see Joining Words.

Sometimes, however, the effect is what will motivate the reader, especially when that effect is a problem, and it's something you would like the reader to act upon. In this case, sometimes the effect is demonstrated through an example first -- in the introduction. This is a common way that writers of feature articles for newspapers and magazines begin their essays.

Writing at Work

A common need for writing at work is to propose alternative or better ways of doing things, whether that be a process or policy improvement (for efficiency or quality control, etc.) These are basically problem/solution "papers" that must show the cause and effect of the "problem" before providing potential solutions. Ordering your writing with the problem before the solution is always best to keep your reader engaged with yoru proposal.

Exercise 5

On a separate piece of paper, think of a problem in society (yes, there are many from which to choose). This problem is the effect of something. Now think of some of the causes of that problem/effect. While one thing may not be a cause in and of itself, combined with other causes, they may together create an effect that is a problem. **Careful though!** Just because one event occurs before another doesn't mean that the first event *caused* the second event. It could just be a concidence. Assuming this is called a fallacy of the consequent (see logical fallacies). But write downa list of things that may -- together or individually -- help cause the effect. Then think about how those causes relate to each other to create the effect.

Writing an Outline

For an essay question on a test or a brief oral presentation in class, all you may need to prepare is 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 in a stressful situation and to include all the good 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 before writing a major paper 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.

Drafting an Outline

While there are distinct differences between developing and organizing support, and between developing/organizing support and drafting the essay, differentiating these steps can sometimes be difficult – in many cases, they blend into one another. As you develop support, you may find that you are also organizing that support into categories, thus creating a draft in outline form.

If outlining seems logical to your way of thinking and approaching a writing project, know that there are several different kinds of outlines:

- Roman or Arabic Numeral (highly structured, more formal). You can use this for full sentence outlines.
- bullet point (less structured, more informal)
- mind map (less structured, more informal)
- other methods as appropriate, such as a timeline, PowerPoint slides, or whatever method works for the topic and your own way of thinking about the topic

> **Tip**
>
> Instructors may also require you to submit an outline with your final draft to check the direction of the assignment and the logic of your final draft. If you are required to submit an outline with the final draft of a paper, remember to revise the outline to reflect any changes you made while writing the paper.

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.

Here is what the skeleton of a traditional formal outline looks like. The indention helps clarify how the ideas are related.

1. Introduction: Thesis statement
2. Main point 1 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 1*
    1. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1*
        1. Subpoint
        2. Subpoint
    2. Supporting detail
        1. Subpoint
        2. Subpoint
    3. Supporting detail
        1. Subpoint
        2. Subpoint
3. Main point 2 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 2*
    1. Supporting detail
    2. Supporting detail
    3. Supporting detail
4. Main point 3 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 3*
    1. Supporting detail
    2. Supporting detail
    3. Supporting detail
5. Conclusion

Figure: of outline from Amazon.

Note

In an outline, any supporting detail can be developed with subpoints. For simplicity, the model shows them only under the first main point.

Tip

Formal outlines are often quite rigid in their organization. As many instructors will specify, you cannot subdivide one point if it is only one part. For example, for every roman numeral I, there must be a II. For every A, there must be a B. For every Arabic numeral 1, there must be a 2. See for yourself on the sample outlines above.

Constructing Topic Outlines

A topic outline is the same as a sentence outline except you use words or phrases instead of complete sentences. Words and phrases keep the outline short and easier to comprehend. All the headings, however, must be written in parallel structure. (For more information on parallel structure, see Chapter 12 “Grammatical Parallelism".)

Here is the topic outline that Mariah constructed for the essay she is developing. Her purpose is to inform, and her audience is a general audience of her fellow college students. Notice how Mariah begins with her thesis statement. She then arranges her main points and supporting details in outline form using short phrases in parallel grammatical structure.

Checklist

1.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?

Bullet Point/Topic Outline

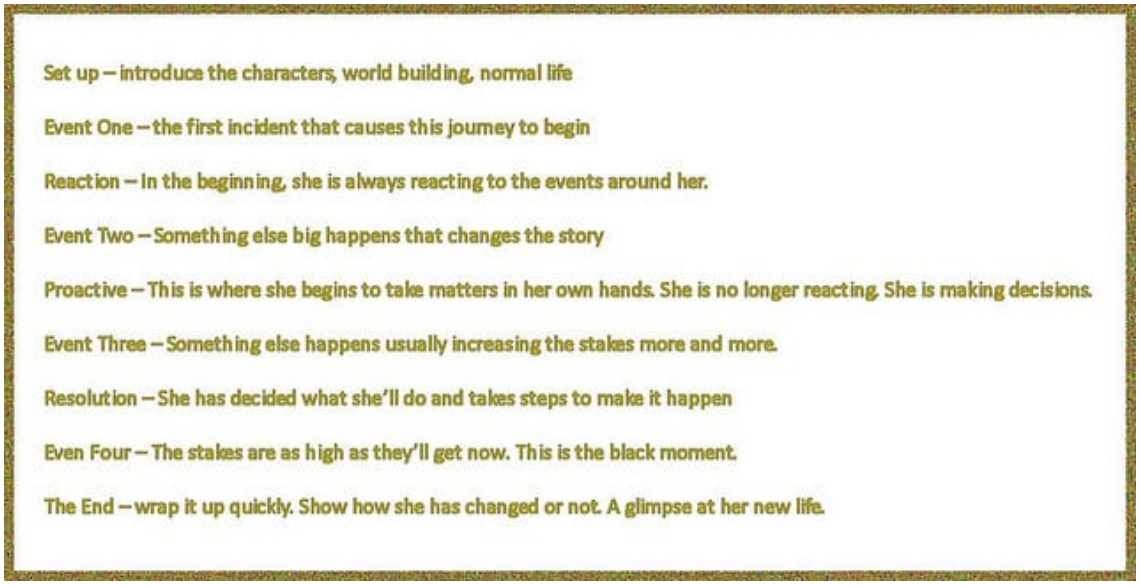

Figure: from Amazon.

Writing at Work

Word processing programs generally have an automatic numbering feature that can be used to prepare outlines. This feature automatically sets indents and lets you use the tab key to arrange information just as you would in an outline. Although in business this style might be acceptable, in college your instructor might have different requirements. Teach yourself how to customize the levels of outline numbering in your word-processing program to fit your instructor's preferences.

Exercise 5

Using the working thesis statement you wrote and the reading you did in Section 4.6 "Prewriting Strategies", construct a topic outline for your essay. Be sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentions and the use of Roman and Arabic numerals and capital letters.

2. Constructing Sentence Outlines

A sentence outline is the same as a topic outline except you use complete sentences instead of words or phrases. Complete sentences create clarity and can advance you one step closer to a draft in the writing process. Here is the sentence outline that Mariah constructed for the essay she is developing.

Thesis statement: E-mail and internet monitoring, as currently practiced, is an invasion of employees' rights in the workplace.

1. 1. The situation: Over 80% of today's companies monitor their employees.
      1. To prevent fraudulent activities, theft, and other workplace related violations.
      2. To more efficiently monitor employee productivity.
      3. To prevent any legal liabilities due to harassing or offensive communications.
   2. What are employees' privacy rights when it comes to electronic monitoring and surveillance in the workplace?
      1. American employees have basically no legal protection from mean and snooping bosses.
         1. There are no federal or state laws protecting employees.
         2. Employees may assert privacy protection for their own personal effects.
      2. Most managers believe that there is no right to privacy in the workplace.
         1. Workplace communications should be about work; anything else is a misuse of company equipment and

company time.
2. Employers have a right to prevent misuse by monitoring employee communications.

Tip

The information compiled under each Roman numeral will become a paragraph in your final paper. In the previous example, the outline follows the standard five-paragraph essay arrangement, but longer essays will require more paragraphs and thus more roman numerals. If you think that a paragraph might become too long or stringy, add an additional paragraph to your outline, renumbering the main points appropriately.

3. Mind Map Outline

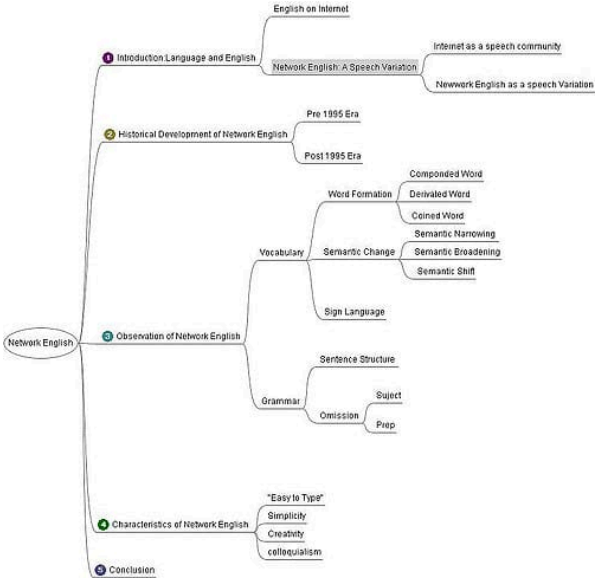

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Wrapping Up

Whichever type of outline you've started with, it can conveniently morph into an essay draft, simply by choosing a portion of the outline as a place to start writing. Start developing that portion with topic sentences, full sentences, complete thoughts, details, examples, facts, opinions, and all appropriate types of support. Remember that an outline identifies the ideas you intend to use in the essay; you develop the actual essay draft by adding support and explanation to those ideas.

One of the many advantages to working from an outline is that you create an idea structure and can see visually how/whether those ideas relate, so you can see what needs to be added or edited. Because outlines capture ideas, they also allow you to begin your draft with whatever section or group of ideas you choose. Pick a section you feel strongly about, and start there. Move around your outline in whatever order you choose, in order to keep the momentum going to develop your essay draft.

Writing at Work

PowerPoint presentations, used both in schools and in the workplace, are organized in a way very similar to formal outlines. PowerPoint presentations often contain information in the form of talking points that the presenter develops with more details and examples than are contained on the PowerPoint slide.

Exercise 6

Expand the topic outline you prepared to make it a sentence outline. In this outline, be sure to include multiple supporting points for your main topic even if your topic outline does not currently contain them. Be sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentions and the use of Roman and Arabic numerals and capital letters.

The following video explains a little more about outlining.

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

Video 4.7.1

Outlines. **Authored By:** University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill Writing Center. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Post-Outlining

Some people have to write a complete draft first. If you *must* do this, you should do a post-outline. The process of writing a post-outline involves going through your very rough draft and writing down the thesis (if there is one -- it may appear at the beginning of the conclusion), the main idea of each paragraph, and the major subpoints of each paragraph in a formal outline form. Then, make sure that each subpoint actually relates to the main idea of each paragraph and that each main idea/topic sentence relates to your thesis. You may find that you need to move some parts of paragraphs to different paragraph or delete some parts of paragraphs that are completely off-topic. Then, do the same thing with the major subpoints and the supporting information. Be sure that each quote or paraphrase supports the major subpoint. If it doesn't, find more appropriate support. This process can take a lot longer than writing an outline before you draft and really only works if you are writing a shorter paper. Do try to write an outline first before drafting longer papers.

Contributors

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4.8: Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways

- Reading and writing – especially academic reading and writing -- are recursive processes in which meaning is made during the acts of reading and writing.
- The interaction between audience, tone, and purpose all affect various aspects of the content you choose to use.
- Making an argument involves choosing evidence that is both appropriate for what you want to prove and also effective for the audience.
- Counter-argument involves anticipating the audience's potential objections to your argument and addressing them.
- Using prewriting strategies can help you narrow your focus and decide if the topic is going to work for you.
- There are a number of ways to develop an outline, and you should do so for any essay that requires you to think about how you might organize your thoughts.

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5: THESIS STATEMENTS, TOPIC SENTENCES AND THE FIRST DRAFT

5.1: Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement

5.2: Topic Sentences

5.3: Writing the Essay Draft

5.4: Writing Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs

5.5: Key Takeaways

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5.1: Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Have you ever known a person who was not very good at telling stories? You probably had trouble following his train of thought as he jumped around from point to point, either being too brief in places that needed further explanation or providing too many details on a meaningless element. Maybe he told the end of the story first, then moved to the beginning and later added details to the middle. His ideas were probably scattered, and the story did not flow very well. When the story was over, you probably had many questions.

Just as a personal anecdote can be a disorganized mess, an essay can fall into the same trap of being out of order and confusing. That is why writers need a thesis statement to provide a specific focus for their essay and to organize what they are about to discuss in the body.

Just like a topic sentence summarizes a single paragraph, the thesis statement summarizes an entire essay. It tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point. It is like a signpost that signals the essay's destination. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that it needs revision as the essay develops.

Elements of a Thesis Statement

For every essay you write, you must focus on a central idea. This idea stems from a topic you have chosen or been assigned or from a question your teacher has asked. It is not enough merely to discuss a general topic or simply answer a question with a yes or no. You have to form a specific opinion, and then articulate that into a controlling idea—the main idea upon which you build your thesis.

Remember that a thesis is not the topic itself, but rather your interpretation of the question or subject. For whatever topic your professor gives you, you must ask yourself, "What do I want to say about it?" Asking and then answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is precise, forceful and confident.

A thesis is one sentence long and appears toward the end of your introduction. It is specific and focuses on one to three points of a single idea—points that are able to be demonstrated in the body. It forecasts the content of the essay and suggests how you will organize your information. Remember that a thesis statement does not summarize an issue but rather dissects it.

A Strong Thesis Statement

A strong thesis statement contains the following qualities.

- **Specificity.** A thesis statement must concentrate on a specific area of a general topic. As you may recall, the creation of a thesis statement begins when you choose a broad subject and then narrow down its parts until you pinpoint a specific aspect of that topic. For example, health care is a broad topic, but a proper thesis statement would focus on a specific area of that topic, such as options for individuals without health care coverage.
- **Precision.** A strong thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and to remain focused on the topic. If the specific topic is options for individuals without health care coverage, then your precise thesis statement must make an exact claim about it, such as that limited options exist for those who are uninsured by their employers. You must further pinpoint what you are going to discuss regarding these limited effects, such as whom they affect and what the cause is.
- **Ability to be argued.** A thesis statement must present a relevant and specific argument. A factual statement often is not considered arguable. Be sure your thesis statement contains a point of view that can be supported with evidence.
- **Ability to be demonstrated.** For any claim you make in your thesis, you must be able to provide reasons and examples for your opinion. You can rely on personal observations in order to do this, or you can consult outside sources to demonstrate that what you assert is valid. A worthy argument is backed by examples and details.
- **Forcefulness.** A thesis statement that is forceful shows readers that you are, in fact, making an argument. The tone is assertive and takes a stance that others might oppose.
- **Confidence.** In addition to using force in your thesis statement, you must also use confidence in your claim. Phrases such as *I feel* or *I believe* actually weaken the readers' sense of your confidence because these phrases imply that you are the only person who feels the way you do. In other words, your stance has insufficient backing. Taking an authoritative stance on the matter persuades your readers to have faith in your argument and open their minds to what you have to say.

Tip

Even in a personal essay that allows the use of first person, your thesis should not contain phrases such as *in my opinion* or *I believe*. These statements reduce your credibility and weaken your argument. Your opinion is more convincing when you use a firm attitude.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, write a thesis statement for each of the following topics. Remember to make each statement specific, precise, demonstrable, forceful and confident.

Topics

- Texting while driving
- The legal drinking age in the United States
- Steroid use among professional athletes
- Abortion
- Racism

Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

Each of the following thesis statements meets several of the following requirements:

- Specificity
- Precision
- Ability to be argued
- Ability to be demonstrated
- Forcefulness
- Confidence

1. The societal and personal struggles of Troy Maxon in the play *Fences* symbolize the challenge of black males who lived

through segregation and integration in the United States.
2. Closing all American borders for a period of five years is one solution that will tackle illegal immigration.
3. Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony in *Romeo and Juliet* spoils the outcome for the audience and weakens the plot.
4. J. D. Salinger's character in *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield, is a confused rebel who voices his disgust with phonies, yet in an effort to protect himself, he acts like a phony on many occasions.
5. Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.
6. Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
7. In today's crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough education to land a stable, lucrative job.

Five Ways of Looking at a Thesis

1. A thesis creates an argument that builds from one point to the next, giving the paper a direction that the audience can follow as the paper develops.

This point often separates the best theses from the pack. A good thesis can prevent the two weakest ways of organizing a critical paper: the pile of information and the plot summary with comments. A paper that presents a pile of information will frequently introduce new paragraphs with transitions that simply indicate the addition of more stuff. ("Another character who exhibits these traits is X," for instance.) Consider these examples:

A: *The Rules* and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* both tell women how to act.

B: By looking at *The Rules*, a modern conduct book for women, we can see how Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* is itself like a conduct book, questioning the rules for social success in her society and offering a new model.

Example A would almost inevitably lead to a paper organized as a pile of information. A plot summary with comments follows the chronological development of a text while picking out the same element of every segment; a transition in such a paper might read, "In the next scene, the color blue also figures prominently." Both of these approaches constitute too much of a good thing. Papers must compile evidence, of course, and following the chronology of a text can sometimes help a reader keep track of a paper's argument.

The best papers, however, will develop according to a more complex logic articulated in a strong thesis. Example B above would lead a paper to organize its evidence according to the paper's own logic.

2. A thesis fits comfortably into the Magic Thesis Sentence (MTS).

The MTS: By looking at _____, we can see _____, which most readers don't see; it is important to look at this aspect of the text because _____.

Try it out with the examples from the first point:

A: By telling the story of Wesley and Buttercup's triumph over evil, *The Princess Bride* affirms the power of true love.

B: Although the main plot of *The Princess Bride* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks–baseball bats, tree branches, and swords–link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the narrator's grandson is being trained in true love, that love is not natural but socialized.

Notice that the MTS adds a new dimension to point number one above. The first part of the MTS asks you to find something strange ("which most readers don't see"), and the second part asks you to think about the importance of the strangeness. Thesis A would not work at all in the MTS; one could not reasonably state that "most readers [or viewers] don't see" that film's affirmation of true love, and the statement does not even attempt to explain the importance of its claim. Thesis B, on the other hand, gives us a way to complete the MTS, as in "By looking at the way fighting sticks link the plot and frame of *The Princess Bride*, we can see the way the narrator's grandson is trained in true love, which most people don't see; it is important to look at this aspect of the text because unlike the rest of the film, the fighting sticks suggest that love is not natural but socialized." One does not need to write out the MTS in such a neat one-sentence form, of course, but thinking through the structure of the MTS can help refine thesis ideas.

3. A thesis says something about the text(s) *exclusively*.

If a thesis could describe many works equally well, it needs to be more specific. Let's return to our examples from above:

A: By telling the story of Wesley and Buttercup's triumph over evil, *The Princess Bride* affirms the power of true love.

B: Although the main plot of *The Princess Bride* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks–baseball bats, tree branches, and swords–link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the narrator's grandson is being trained in true love, that love is not natural but socialized.

Try substituting other works:

A: By telling the story of Darcy and Elizabeth's triumph over evil, *Pride and Prejudice* affirms the power of true love.

Sure, that makes sense. Bad sign.

B: Although the main plot of *Pride and Prejudice* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks–baseball bats, tree branches, and swords–link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the grandson is being trained in true love, that it is not natural but socialized.

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Um, nope. Even if you have never read *Pride and Prejudice*, you can probably guess that such a precise thesis could hardly apply to other works. Good sign. The point here is that the thesis needs to be specific enough that its meaning relates to the specific work(s) you are writing about -- be it fiction or nonfiction.

4. A thesis makes a lot of information irrelevant.

If the thesis is specific enough, it will make a point that focuses on only a small part of the text be analyzed or a particular aspect of a larger topic. A writer should ultimately apply that point to the work as a whole, but a thesis will call attention to specific parts of it. Let's look at those examples again. (This is the last time, I promise.)

A: By telling the story of Wesley and Buttercup's triumph over evil, *The Princess Bride* affirms the power of true love.

B: Although the main plot of *The Princess Bride* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks–baseball bats, tree branches, and swords–link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the narrator's grandson is being trained in true love, that love is not natural but socialized.

One way of spotting the problem with Example A is to note that a simple plot summary would support its point. That is not of true example B, which tells the reader exactly what moments the paper will be discussed and why. The thesis is focused and concentrated.

5. Remember to Address the Work as a Whole: The “So What?”

As you complete your analysis, remember to think about what the effect this will have on the world of academia.

- Does your thesis introduce your topic in a clear way?
- Does the introduction mention what you will be addressing? Social constructs, gender issues, etc.

Writing a Thesis Statement

One legitimate question readers always ask about a piece of writing is “What is the big idea?” (You may even ask this question when you are the reader, critically reading an assignment or another document.) Every nonfiction writing task—from the short essay to the ten-page term paper to the lengthy senior thesis—needs a big idea, or a controlling idea, as the spine for the work. The controlling idea is the main idea that you want to present and develop.

Tip

For a longer piece of writing, the main idea should be broader than the main idea for a shorter piece of writing. Be sure to frame a main idea that is appropriate for the length of the assignment. Ask yourself, “How many pages will it take for me to explain and explore this main idea in detail?” Be reasonable with your estimate. Then expand or trim it to fit the required length.

Developing Thesis Statements from Topics

The big idea, or controlling idea, you want to present in an essay is expressed in a thesis statement. A thesis statement is often one sentence long, and it states your point of view. The thesis statement is not the topic of the piece of writing but rather what you have to say about that topic and what is important to tell readers.

Table 5.1 “Topics and Thesis Statements” compares topics and thesis statements.

Table 5.1 Topics and Thesis Statements

Topic	Thesis Statement
Music piracy	The recording industry fears that so-called music piracy will diminish profits and destroy markets, but it cannot be more wrong.
The number of consumer choices available in media gear	Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are extensive, and the specifications are often confusing.
E-books and online newspapers are increasing their share of the market.	E-books and online newspapers will bring an end to print media as we know it.
Online education and the new media	Someday, students and teachers will send avatars to their online classrooms.

The first thesis statement you write will be a preliminary thesis statement, or a working thesis statement. You will need it when you begin to outline your assignment as a way to organize it. As you continue to develop the arrangement, you can limit your working thesis statement if it is too broad or expand it if it proves too narrow for what you want to say.

Exercise 2

Using the topic you selected in Section 4.6 “Prewriting Strategies”, develop a working thesis statement that states your controlling idea for the piece of writing you are doing. On a sheet of paper, write your working thesis statement.

Tip

You will make several attempts before you devise a working thesis statement that you think is effective. Each draft of the thesis statement will bring you closer to the wording that expresses your meaning exactly. Sometimes, this refinement of the thesis statement happens after your write your first draft of the paper.

Guidelines for Drafting a Thesis Statement

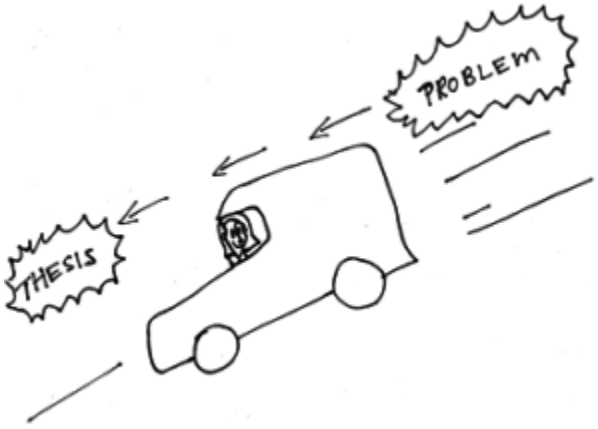

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

It helps to understand why readers value the arguable thesis. What larger purpose does it serve? Readers will bring a set of expectations to an essay. If writers can anticipate the expectations of their readers, the better they will be able to persuade the audience to find the arguments convincing, interesting, and relevant.

Academic readers (and readers more generally) read to learn something new. They want to see the writer challenge commonplaces—either everyday assumptions about the object of study or truisms in the scholarly literature. In other words, academic readers want to be surprised so that their thinking shifts or at least becomes more complex by the time they finish reading an essay. Good essays problematize what we think we know and offer an alternative explanation in its place. They leave their reader with a fresh perspective on a problem.

We all bring important past experiences and beliefs to our interpretations of texts, objects, and problems. Writers can harness these observational powers to engage critically with what they are studying. The key is to be alert to what strikes you as strange, problematic, paradoxical, or puzzling about your topic. If writers can articulate this and a claim in response, they are well on their way to formulating an arguable thesis in the introduction.

How do I set up a “problem” and an arguable thesis in response?

All good writing has a purpose or motive for existing. The thesis is the writer’s surprising response to this problem or motive. This is why it seldom makes sense to start a writing project by articulating the thesis. The first step is to articulate the question or problem your paper addresses.

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Here are some possible ways to introduce a conceptual problem in your paper's introduction.

1. Challenge a commonplace interpretation (or your own first impressions).

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

How are readers likely to interpret this source or issue? What might intelligent readers think at first glance? (Or, if you've been given secondary sources or have been asked to conduct research to locate secondary sources, what do other writers or scholars assume is true or important about your primary source or issue?)

What does this commonplace interpretation leave out, overlook, or under-emphasize?

2. Help the reader see the complexity of your topic.

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Identify and describe for the reader a paradox, puzzle, or contradiction in a primary source(s).

What larger questions does this paradox or contradiction raise for readers?

3. If research is part of the assignment, piggyback off another scholar's research.

Figure: Summarize another scholar's argument about the topic, primary source, or case study and explain to the reader why this claim is interesting and explain how the claim will extend this scholar's argument to explore an issue or case study that the scholar doesn't address fully.

4. If research is part of the assignment, identify a gap in another scholar's or a group of scholars' research.

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Summarize another scholar's argument about your topic, primary source, or case study and explain to the reader why this claim is interesting. Or, summarize how scholars in the field tend to approach the topic.

Next, explain what important aspect this scholarly representation misses or distorts. Introduce the particular approach to the topic and its value.

5. If research is part of the assignment, bring in a new lens for investigating the case study or problem.

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Summarize how a scholar or group of scholars has approached the topic.

Introduce a theoretical source (possibly from another discipline) and explain how it helps to address this issue from a new and productive angle.

Tip: your introductory paragraph will probably look like this:

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Testing Your Thesis

Test a thesis statement's arguability by asking the following questions:

1) Does the thesis only or mostly summarize a source?

If so, try some of the exercises above to articulate the paper's conceptual problem or question.

2) Is the thesis arguable – can it be supported by evidence, and is it surprising and contentious?

If not, return to the sources and practice the exercises above.

3) Is the thesis about the primary source, or is it about the world?

If it's about the world, revise it so that it focuses on primary source(s). Remember to include solid evidence to support the thesis.

"THREE-STORY THESIS STATEMENTS" BY AMY GUPTIL

How do you produce a good, strong thesis? And how do you know when you've gotten there? Many instructors and writers find useful a metaphor based on this passage by Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.:[3]

> There are one-story intellects, two-story intellects, and three-story intellects with skylights. All fact collectors who have no aim beyond their facts are one-story men. Two-story men compare, reason, generalize using the labor of fact collectors as their own. Three-story men idealize, imagine, predict—their best illumination comes from above the skylight.

One-story theses state inarguable facts. Two-story theses bring in an arguable (interpretive or analytical) point. Three-story theses nest that point within its larger, compelling implications. [4]

The biggest benefit of the three-story metaphor is that it describes a process for building a thesis. To build the first story, you first have to get familiar with the complex, relevant facts surrounding the problem or question. You have to be able to describe the situation thoroughly and accurately. Then, with that first story built, you can layer on the second story by formulating the insightful, arguable point that animates the analysis. That's often the most effortful part: brainstorming, elaborating and comparing alternative ideas, finalizing your point. With that specified, you can frame up the third story by articulating why the point you make matters beyond its particular topic or case.

Thesis: that's the word that pops at me whenever I write an essay. Seeing this word in the prompt scared me and made me think to myself, "Oh great, what are they really looking for?" or "How am I going to make a thesis for a college paper?" When rehearing that I would be focusing on theses again in a class, I said to myself, "Here we go again!" But after learning about the three story thesis, I never had a problem with writing another thesis. In fact, I look forward to being asked on a paper to create a thesis.

Timothée Pizarro

For example, imagine you have been assigned a paper about the impact of online learning in higher education. You would first construct an account of the origins and multiple forms of online learning and assess research findings about its use and effectiveness. If you've done that well, you'll probably come up with a well considered opinion that wouldn't be obvious to readers who haven't looked at the issue in depth. Maybe you'll want to argue that online learning is a threat to the academic community. Or perhaps you'll want to make the case that online learning opens up pathways to college degrees that traditional campus-based learning does not. In the course of developing your central, argumentative point, you'll come to recognize its larger context; in this example, you may claim that online learning can serve to better integrate higher education with the rest of society, as online learners bring their educational and career experiences together. To outline this example:

- *First story*: Online learning is becoming more prevalent and takes many different forms.
- *Second story*: While most observers see it as a *transformation* of higher education, online learning is better thought of an *extension* of higher education in that it reaches learners who aren't disposed to participate in traditional campus-based education.
- *Third story*: Online learning appears to be a promising way to better integrate higher education with other institutions in society, as online learners integrate their educational experiences with the other realms of their life, promoting the freer flow of ideas between the academy and the rest of society.

Here's another example of a three-story thesis:[5]

- *First story*: Edith Wharton did not consider herself a modernist writer, and she didn't write like her modernist contemporaries.
- *Second story*: However, in her work we can see her grappling with both the questions and literary forms that fascinated modernist writers of her era. While not an avowed modernist, she did engage with modernist themes and questions.
- *Third story*: Thus, it is more revealing to think of modernism as a conversation rather than a category or practice.

Here's one more example:

- *First story*: Scientists disagree about the likely impact in the U.S. of the light brown apple moth (LBAM), an agricultural pest native to Australia.

- *Second story*: Research findings to date suggest that the decision to spray pheromones over the skies of several southern Californian counties to combat the LBAM was poorly thought out.
- *Third story*: Together, the scientific ambiguities and the controversial response strengthen the claim that industrial-style approaches to pest management are inherently unsustainable.

A thesis statement that stops at the first story isn't usually considered a thesis. A two-story thesis is usually considered competent, though some two-story theses are more intriguing and ambitious than others. A thoughtfully crafted and well informed three-story thesis puts the author on a smooth path toward an excellent paper.

The concept of a three-story thesis framework was the most helpful piece of information I gained from the writing component of DCC 100. The first time I utilized it in a college paper, my professor included "good thesis" and "excellent introduction" in her notes and graded it significantly higher than my previous papers. You can expect similar results if you dig deeper to form three-story theses. More importantly, doing so will make the actual writing of your paper more straightforward as well. Arguing something specific makes the structure of your paper much easier to design.

Peter Farrell

Effective Thesis Statements

As mentioned before, a thesis statement is the controlling idea of your essay. It is the main idea that all of the other sentences in the essay relate to. After gathering information about your topic, you need to figure out what you want to say about it.

An effective thesis statement has two major characteristics.

1. An effective thesis statement makes a point about a topic. For this reason, it must do more than state a fact or announce what you plan to write about.

Statement of fact: The military recruits students in high schools.

Announcement: In this essay, I would like to discuss what's wrong with military recruitment in high schools.

List thesis: We should not allow the military to recruit in high schools because recruiters violate privacy, manipulate naïve young people, and target low-income youth.

Effective thesis: We should end the abusive and discriminatory practice of military recruitment in high schools.

A statement of fact is not an effective thesis statement because it does not take a position, giving you nothing to develop in your essay. Likewise, an announcement of what you plan to write about in your essay does not take a position on the issue, leaving you with nothing to develop. A good thesis statement makes a claim that is arguable.

2. The most effective thesis statements do not list your main points but unite your main points into a larger, central idea. The list thesis above looks strong, but notice how the effective thesis connects the three points with the words "abusive" and "discriminatory." Now we know how the three points relate to each other; they are more than just a list.

To turn three or four "reasons" or topic sentences into a thesis, consider what they have in common and what your overall point is.

Tip

You can find thesis statements in many places, such as in the news; in the opinions of friends, coworkers or teachers; and even in songs you hear on the radio. Become aware of thesis statements in everyday life by paying attention to people's opinions and their reasons for those opinions. Pay attention to your own everyday thesis statements as well, as these can become material for future essays.

Now that you have read about the contents of a good thesis statement and have seen examples, take a look at the pitfalls to avoid when composing your own thesis:

- A thesis is weak when it is simply a declaration of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay.

  Weak thesis statement: My paper will explain why imagination is more important than knowledge.

- A thesis is weak when it makes an unreasonable or outrageous claim or insults the opposing side.

  Weak thesis statement: Religious radicals across America are trying to legislate their Puritanical beliefs by banning required high school books.

- A thesis is weak when it contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a dead end.

  Weak thesis statement: Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.

- A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad.

  Weak thesis statement: The life of Abraham Lincoln was long and challenging.

Exercise 3

Read the following thesis statements. On a separate piece of paper, identify each as weak or strong. For those that are weak, list the reasons why. Then revise the weak statements so that they conform to the requirements of a strong thesis.

1. The subject of this paper is my experience with ferrets as pets.
2. The government must expand its funding for research on renewable energy resources in order to prepare for the impending end of oil.
3. Edgar Allan Poe was a poet who lived in Baltimore during the nineteenth century.
4. In this essay, I will give you lots of reasons why slot machines should not be legalized in Baltimore.
5. Despite his promises during his campaign, President Kennedy took few executive measures to support civil rights legislation.
6. Because many children's toys have potential safety hazards that could lead to injury, it is clear that not all children's toys are safe.
7. My experience with young children has taught me that I want to be a disciplinary parent because I believe that a child without discipline can be a parent's worst nightmare.

Writing at Work

Often in your career, you will need to ask your manager for something through an e-mail. Just as a thesis statement organizes an essay, it can also organize your e-mail request. While your e-mail will be shorter than an essay, using a thesis statement in your first paragraph quickly lets your manager know what you are asking for, why it is necessary, and what the benefits are. In short body paragraphs, you can provide the essential information needed to expand upon your request.

Thesis Statement Revision

Your thesis will probably change as you write, so you will need to modify it to reflect exactly what you have discussed in your essay. Remember from Chapter 4 that your thesis statement begins as a working thesis statement, an indefinite statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process for the purpose of planning and guiding your writing.

Working thesis statements often become stronger as you gather information and form new opinions and reasons for those opinions. Revision helps you strengthen your thesis so that it matches what you have expressed in the body of the paper.

Tip

The best way to revise your thesis statement is to ask questions about it and then examine the answers to those questions. By challenging your own ideas and forming definite reasons for those ideas, you grow closer to a more precise point of view, which you can then incorporate into your thesis statement.

Ways to Revise Your Thesis

You can cut down on irrelevant aspects and revise your thesis by taking the following steps:

1. Pinpoint and replace all nonspecific words, such as *people*, *everything*, *society*, or *life*, with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness.

Working thesis: Young people have to work hard to succeed in life.

Revised thesis: Recent college graduates must have discipline and persistence in order to find and maintain a stable job in which they can use and be appreciated for their talents.

The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard. The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing those general words like *people* and *work hard*, the writer can better focus their research and gain more direction in their writing.

2. Clarify ideas that need explanation by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis.

Working thesis: The welfare system is a joke.

Revised thesis: The welfare system keeps a socioeconomic class from gaining employment by alluring members of that class with unearned income instead of programs to improve their education and skill sets.

A joke means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for *joke*. The writer should ask himself or herself questions similar to the 5WH questions. (See Chapter 4.6 "Prewriting Strategies" for more information on the 5WH questions.) By incorporating the answers to these questions into a thesis statement, the writer more accurately defines his or her stance, which will better guide the writing of the essay.

3. Replace any linking verbs with action verbs. Linking verbs are forms of the verb *to be*, a verb that simply states that a situation exists.

Working thesis: Kansas City schoolteachers are not paid enough.

Revised thesis: Kansas City cannot afford to pay its educators, resulting in job cuts and resignations in a district that sorely needs highly qualified and dedicated teachers.

The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word *are*. Linking verbs often make thesis statements weak because they do not express action. Rather, they connect words and phrases to the second half of the sentence. Readers might wonder, “Why are they not paid enough?” But this statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. The writer should ask himself or herself questions in order to replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement, one that takes a more definitive stance on the issue:

- Who is not paying the teachers enough?
- What is considered “enough”?
- What is the problem?
- What are the results

Exercise 4

In an earlier section you determined your purpose for writing and your audience. You then completed a free writing exercise about an event you recently experienced and chose a general topic to write about. Using that general topic, you then narrowed it down by answering the 5WH questions. After you answered these questions, you chose one of the three methods of prewriting and gathered possible supporting points for your working thesis statement.

Now, on a separate sheet of paper, write down your working thesis statement. Identify any weaknesses in this sentence and revise the statement to reflect the elements of a strong thesis statement. Make sure it is specific, precise, arguable, demonstrable, forceful, and confident.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

In your career you may have to write a project proposal that focuses on a particular problem in your company, such as reinforcing the tardiness policy. The proposal would aim to fix the problem; using a thesis statement would clearly state the boundaries of the problem and tell the goals of the project. After writing the proposal, you may find that the thesis needs revision to reflect exactly what is expressed in the body. Using the techniques from this chapter would apply to revising that thesis.

Video

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5.2: Topic Sentences

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Now that you have identified common purposes for writing, learned how to select appropriate content for a particular audience, and written a working thesis (at least) you can think about the structure of a paragraph in greater detail. Composing an effective paragraph requires a method similar to building a house. You may have the finest content, or materials, but if you do not arrange them in the correct order, then the final product will not hold together very well.

A strong paragraph contains three distinct components:

1. **Topic sentence.** The topic sentence is the main idea of the paragraph.
2. **Body.** The body is composed of the supporting sentences that develop the main point.
3. **Conclusion.** The conclusion is the final sentence that summarizes the main point.

The foundation of a good paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence relates to the thesis, or main point, of the essay and guides the reader by sign-posting what the paragraph is about. All the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence.

Topic Sentences

In academic writing, readers expect each paragraph to have a sentence or two that captures its main point. They're often called "topic sentences" or "main ideas." Don't be fooled by the phrase "topic sentence" though. It makes it seem like sentence's job is simply to announce the topic of the paragraph. Rather think about the topic sentence for the paragraph in the same way you think about the thesis statement for the essay as a whole (see "Thesis Statements"). Sometimes topic sentence will also include a transition from the previous paragraph, but not always. A topic sentence should never simply be a transition.

Consider these two examples: [2]

Version A: *Now we turn to the epidemiological evidence.*

Version B: *The epidemiological evidence provides compelling support for the hypothesis emerging from etiological studies.*

Both versions convey a topic; it's pretty easy to predict that the paragraph will be about epidemiological evidence, but only the second version establishes an argumentative point and puts it in context. The paragraph doesn't just describe the epidemiological evidence; it shows how epidemiology is telling the same story as etiology. Similarly, while Version A doesn't relate to anything in

particular, Version B immediately suggests that the prior paragraph addresses the biological pathway (i.e. etiology) of a disease and that the new paragraph will bolster the emerging hypothesis with a different kind of evidence. As a reader, it's easy to keep track of how the paragraph about cells and chemicals and such relates to the paragraph about populations in different places.

By clearly establishing an essential point within its analytic context, a well written topic sentence gives both you and your reader a firm grasp of how each point relates. For example, compare these two sets of topic sentences, each introducing a sequential paragraph[3]:

Set A:

At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, the cause of the disease was unclear. …

The cause of AIDS is HIV.

There are skeptics who question whether HIV is the cause.

Set B:

At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, the cause of the disease was unclear, leading to a broad range of scientific speculation.

By 1986 HIV had been isolated and found to correlate almost exactly with the incidence of AIDS.

HIV skeptics, on the other hand, sought to discredit claims based on epidemiology by emphasizing that the pathogenesis of HIV was still unknown.

Set A isn't wrong per se; it just illustrates a lost opportunity to show the important connections among points. Both versions portray a process unfolding over time: initial uncertainty followed by a breakthrough discovery and then controversy. Even with the same substantive points, a person reading Version A would have to work harder to see how the material in the paragraphs connects. Readers experience Version B as clearer and more engaging.

Thinking of topic sentences as sequential points in an argument reminds one that a key sentence doesn't have to always be a single declarative one. Sometimes you need two sentences together to achieve the work of a topic sentence, and sometimes a question or quotation does a better job than a declarative sentence in clarifying a logical sequence, which brings us to Set C.

Set C:

At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic the cause was unclear. Virologists, bacteriologists, immunologists, and epidemiologists all pursued different leads, reflecting their particular areas of expertise.

If drug use, lifestyle, and "immune overload" didn't cause AIDS, what did?

*"I've asked questions they apparently can't answer," claimed retrovirologist **Peter Duesberg**[4] who became an oft-quoted skeptical voice in media accounts of AIDS research in the mid-1980s.*

Set C is based on the same three sequential points as Sets A and B: (1) the cause of AIDS was initially unclear (2) HIV was accepted as the cause (3) lone dissenters questioned the claims. However, sets B and C have much more meaning and momentum, and set C, depending on the nature of the argument, features more precise and lively stylistic choices. Opening the second paragraph with a question (that then gets answered) carries forth the sense of befuddlement that researchers initially experienced and helps to convey why the discovery of HIV was a hugely important turning point. Using the self-glorifying Duesberg quote to launch the third paragraph makes the point about lingering skepticism while also introducing a portrait of a leading figure among the skeptics. While Set B is effective as well, Set C illustrates some of the more lively choices available to academic writers.

A last thing to note about topic sentences is that academic readers expect them to be at the beginning of the paragraph.[5] That helps readers comprehend your argument. To see how, try this: find an academic piece (such as a textbook or scholarly article) that strikes you as well written and go through part of it reading just the first sentence of each paragraph. You should be able to easily follow the sequence of logic. When you're writing for professors, it is especially effective to put your key sentences first because they usually convey your own original thinking, which, as you've read here, is exactly what your instructors are looking for in your work. It's a very good sign when your paragraphs are typically composed of a telling key sentence followed by evidence

and explanation.

Writing at Work

In the work world, people can be very busy and may not have time to read all the details of a proposal you might make. For this reason, in business writing, people want to know your point up front and then, if they want to look at your reasoning or support, they will read further. Just as in academic writing, in business writing, the reader should be able to read the first sentence of each paragraph and follow your logical thinking and reasoning.

Knowing this convention of academic writing can help you both read and write more effectively. When you're reading a complicated academic piece for the first time, you might want to go through reading only the first sentence or two of each paragraph to get the overall outline of the argument. Then you can go back and read all of it with a clearer picture of how each of the details fit in.[6] And when you're writing, you may also find it useful to write the first sentence of each paragraph (instead of a topic-based outline) to map out a thorough argument before getting immersed in sentence-level wordsmithing. For example, compare these two scaffolds. Which one would launch you into a smoother drafting process?:[7]

Version A (Topic Outline):

I. Granovetter's "Strength of weak ties"

A. Definition

B. Example—getting jobs

II. Creativity in social networks

A. Explanation

B. Richard Florida's argument

III. Implications

A. For urban planners

B. For institutions of higher education

Version B (Key-Sentence Sketch):

The importance of networking for both career development and social change is well known. Granovetter (1973) explains that weak ties—that is, ties among acquaintances—are often more useful in job hunting because they connect job-seekers to a broader range of people and workplaces. ...

Subsequent research in network analysis has shown that weak ties can promote creativity by bringing ideas together from different social realms. ...

Richard Florida (2002) argues that cities would do well to facilitate weak ties in order to recruit members of the "creative class" and spur economic development. ...

Florida's argument can inspire a powerful new approach to strategic planning within colleges and universities as well. ...

As you can see, emphasizing key sentences in both the process and product of academic writing is one way to ensure that your efforts stay focused on developing your argument and communicating your own original thinking in a clear, logical way.

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Topic versus Controlling Idea

Topic sentences contain both a main idea (the subject, or topic that the writer is discussing) and a controlling idea (the writer's specific stance on that subject). Just as a thesis statement includes an idea that controls a document's focus, a topic sentence must also contain a controlling idea to direct the paragraph. Different writers may use the same main idea but can steer their paragraph in a number of different directions according to their stance on the subject. Read the following examples.

- Marijuana is a destructive influence on teens and causes long-term brain damage.
- The anti-nausea properties in marijuana are a lifeline for many cancer patients.
- Legalizing marijuana would create a higher demand for Class A and Class B drugs.

Although the topic—marijuana—is the same in all three topic sentences, the controlling idea differs depending on the writer's viewpoint.

Exercise 1

Circle the topic and underline the controlling idea in each of the following topic sentences.

1. Exercising three times a week is the only way to maintain good physical health.
2. Sexism and racism are still rampant in today's workplace.
3. Raising the legal driving age to twenty-one would decrease road traffic accidents.
4. Owning a business is the only way to achieve financial success.
5. Dog owners should be prohibited from taking their pets on public beaches.

Characteristics of a Good Topic Sentence

Five characteristics define a good topic sentence:

1. A good topic sentence provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.

   Weak example. People rarely give firefighters the credit they deserve for such a physically and emotionally demanding job. (The paragraph is about a specific incident that involved firefighters; therefore, this topic sentence is too general.)

   Stronger example. During the October riots, Unit 3B went beyond the call of duty. (This topic sentence is more specific and indicates that the paragraph will contain information about a particular incident involving Unit 3B.)

2. A good topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea or opinion.

   Weak example. In this paragraph, I am going to discuss the rising suicide rate among young professionals. (This topic sentence provides a main idea, but it does not present a controlling idea.)

   Stronger example. The rising suicide rate among young professionals is a cause for immediate concern. (This topic sentence presents the writer's opinion on the subject of rising suicide rates among young professionals.)

3. A good topic sentence is clear and easy to follow.

Weak example. In general, writing an essay, thesis, or other academic or nonacademic document is considerably easier and of much higher quality if you first construct an outline, of which there are many different types. (This topic sentence includes a topic and a controlling idea, but both are buried beneath the confusing sentence structure and unnecessary vocabulary. These obstacles make it difficult for the reader to follow.)

Stronger example. Most forms of writing can be improved by first creating an outline. (This topic sentence cuts out unnecessary verbiage and simplifies the previous statement, making it easier for the reader to follow.)

4. A good topic sentence does not include supporting details.

   Weak example. Salaries should be capped in baseball for many reasons, most importantly so we don't allow the same team to win year after year. (This topic sentence includes a supporting detail that should be included later in the paragraph to back up the main point.)

   Stronger example. Introducing a salary cap would improve the game of baseball for many reasons. (This topic sentence omits the additional supporting detail so that it can be expanded upon later in the paragraph.)

5. A good topic sentence engages the reader by using interesting vocabulary.

   Weak example. The military deserves better equipment. (This topic sentence includes a topic and a controlling idea, but the language is bland and unexciting.)

   Stronger example. The appalling lack of resources provided to the military is outrageous and requires our immediate attention. (This topic sentence reiterates the same idea and controlling thesis, but adjectives such as *appalling* and *immediate* better engage the reader. These words also indicate the writer's tone.)

Exercise 2

Choose the most effective topic sentence from the following sentence pairs.

1. a. This paper will discuss the likelihood of the Democrats winning the next election.

   b. To boost their chances of winning the next election, the Democrats need to listen to public opinion.

2. a. The unrealistic demands of multi-national corporations are crippling workers' ability to achieve the American Dream.

   b. Multi-national corporations are crippling the economy because their workers are unable to balance work and personal lives.

3. a. Authors are losing money as a result of technological advances.

   b. The introduction of new technology will devastate the literary world.

4. a. Heavy metal is outdated and radio stations should stop playing it.

   b. Here is why radio stations should stop playing heavy metal.

Exercise 3

Using the tips on developing effective topic sentences in this section, create a topic sentence on each of the following subjects. Remember to include a controlling idea as well as a topic. Write your responses on your own sheet of paper.

1. An endangered species

   _____

2. The cost of fuel

   _____

3. The legal drinking age

   _____

4. A controversial film or novel

   _____

Writing at Work

When creating a workplace document, use the "top-down" approach—keep the topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph so that readers immediately understand the gist of the message. This method saves busy colleagues precious time and effort trying to figure out the main points and relevant details.

Headings are another helpful tool. In a text-heavy document, break up each section with individual headings. These serve as useful navigation aids, enabling colleagues to skim through the document and locate paragraphs that are relevant to them.

Implied Topic Sentences

Some well-organized paragraphs do not contain a topic sentence at all. Instead of being directly stated, the main idea is implied in the content of the paragraph. Read the following example:

> Heaving herself up the stairs, Luella had to pause for breath several times. She let out a wheeze as she sat down heavily in the wooden rocking chair. Tao approached her cautiously, as if she might crumble at the slightest touch. He studied her face, like parchment, stretched across the bones so finely he could almost see right through the skin to the decaying muscle underneath. Luella smiled a toothless grin.

Although no single sentence in this paragraph states the main idea, the entire paragraph focuses on one concept—that Luella is extremely old. The topic sentence is thus implied rather than stated. This technique is often used in descriptive or narrative writing. Implied topic sentences work well if the writer has a firm idea of what he or she intends to say in the paragraph and sticks to it. However, a paragraph loses its effectiveness if an implied topic sentence is too subtle or the writer loses focus.

Tip

Avoid using implied topic sentences in an informational document. Readers often lose patience if they are unable to quickly grasp what the writer is trying to say. The clearest and most efficient way to communicate in an informational document is to position the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph.

Exercise 4

Identify the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence in the following paragraph.

The desert provides a harsh environment in which few mammals are able to adapt. Of these hardy creatures, the kangaroo rat is possibly the most fascinating. Able to live in some of the most arid parts of the southwest, the kangaroo rat neither sweats nor pants to keep cool. Its specialized kidneys enable it to survive on a miniscule amount of water. Unlike other desert creatures, the kangaroo rat does not store water in its body but instead is able to convert the dry seeds it eats into moisture. Its ability to adapt to such a hostile environment makes the kangaroo rat a truly amazing creature.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

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5.3: Writing the Essay Draft

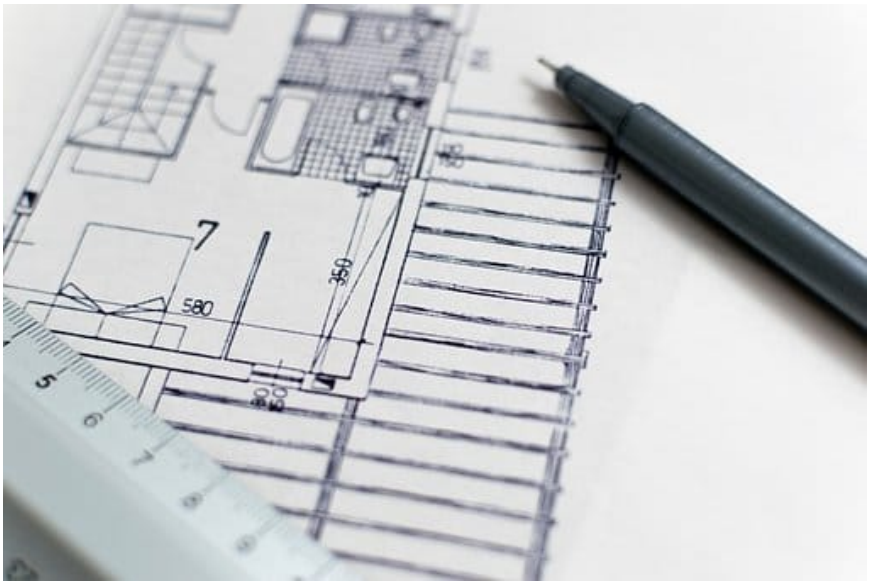


Figure: Image from Pixabay

Drafting is the stage of the writing process in which you develop a complete first version of a piece of writing.

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

Getting Started

Your objective here is to draft the body paragraphs of your essay. Although in college you generally want to move beyond the five-paragraph essay you probably learned in high school, we will review the basics. A five-paragraph essay contains an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. If you are more comfortable starting on paper than on the computer, you can start on paper and then type it before you revise. You can also use a voice recorder to get yourself started, dictating a paragraph or two to get you thinking. In this lesson, Andi does all their work on the computer, but you may use pen and paper or the computer to write a rough draft.

Making the Writing Process Work for You

What makes viewing writing as a process so beneficial to writers is that it encourages alternative strategies and processes to the standard step-by-step view of writing while motivating you to develop your best ideas. For instance, the following approaches, done alone or in combination with others, may improve your writing and help you move forward in your writing process:

- **Begin writing with the part you know the most about.** You can start with the third paragraph in your outline if ideas come easily to mind. You can start with the second paragraph or the first paragraph, too. Although paragraphs may vary in length, keep in mind that short paragraphs may contain insufficient support. Readers may also think the writing is abrupt. Long paragraphs may be wordy and may lose your reader's interest. As a guideline, try to write paragraphs that are between one-half and three-fourth of a page, double spaced.
- **Write one paragraph at a time and then stop.** As long as you complete the assignment on time, you may choose how many paragraphs you complete in one sitting. Pace yourself. On the other hand, try not to procrastinate. Writers should always meet their deadlines.
- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind.** This tip might be most useful if you are writing a multi-page report or essay. Still,

if you are antsy or cannot concentrate, take a break to let your mind rest. But do not let breaks extend too long. If you spend too much time away from your essay, you may have trouble starting again. You may forget key points or lose momentum. Try setting an alarm to limit your break, and when the time is up, return to your desk to write. One tip that writer Stephen King suggests in his book, *On Writing,* is to stop in the middle of a paragraph so you can keep going with what's already in your head at your next sitting without sitting and staring at the screen.

- **Be reasonable with your goals.** If you decide to take ten-minute breaks, try to stick to that goal. If you told yourself that you need more facts, then commit to finding them. Holding yourself to your own goals will create successful writing assignments.
- **Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write.** These aspects of writing are just as important when you are writing a single paragraph for your essay as when you are considering the direction of the entire essay.

Of all of these considerations, keeping your purpose and your audience at the front of your mind is the most important key to writing success. If your purpose is to persuade, you will, for example, present your facts and details in the most logical and convincing way you can.

Your purpose will guide your mind as you compose your sentences. Your audience will guide word choice. Are you writing for experts, for a general audience, for other college students, or for people who know very little about your topic? Keep asking yourself what your readers, with their background and experience, need to be told in order to understand your ideas. How can you best express your ideas so they are totally clear and your communication is effective?

Tip

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

Writing at Work

Many of the documents you produce at work target a particular audience for a particular purpose. You may find that it is highly advantageous to know as much as you can about your target audience and to prepare your message to reach that audience, even if the audience is a coworker or your boss. Menu language is a common example. Descriptions like “organic romaine” and “free-range chicken” are intended to appeal to a certain type of customer though perhaps not to the same customer who craves a thick steak. Similarly, mail-order companies research the demographics of the people who buy their merchandise. Successful vendors customize product descriptions in catalogs to appeal to their buyers’ tastes. For example, the product descriptions in a skateboarder catalog will differ from the descriptions in a clothing catalog for mature adults.

Exercise 1

Using the topic for the essay that you outlined in Section 4.7, describe your purpose and your audience as specifically as you can. Use your own sheet of paper to record your responses. Then keep these responses near you during future stages of the writing process.

My purpose: _____

_____

_____

My audience: _____

_____

_____

Setting Goals for Your First Draft

A draft is a complete version of a piece of writing, but it is not the final version. The step in the writing process after drafting, as you may remember, is revising. During revising, you will have the opportunity to make changes to your first draft before you put the finishing touches on it during the editing and proofreading stage. A first draft gives you a working version that you can later improve.

Writing at Work

Workplace writing in certain environments is done by teams of writers who collaborate on the planning, writing, and revision of documents, such as long reports, technical manuals, and the results of scientific research. Collaborators do not need to be in the same room, the same building, or even the same city. Many collaborations are conducted over the Internet.

In a perfect collaboration, each contributor has the right to add, edit, and delete text. Strong communication skills, in addition to strong writing skills, are important in this kind of writing situation because disagreements over style, content, process, emphasis, and other issues may arise.

The collaborative software, or document management systems, that groups use to work on common projects is sometimes called groupware or workgroup support systems. New, improved programs are continually being developed.

The reviewing tool on some word-processing programs also gives you access to a collaborative tool that many smaller workgroups use when they exchange documents. You can also use it to leave comments to yourself.

Tip

If you invest some time now to investigate how the reviewing tool in your word processor works, you will be able to use it with confidence during the revision stage of the writing process. Then, when you start to revise, set your reviewing tool to track any changes you make, so you will be able to tinker with text and commit only those final changes you want to keep.

Discovering the Basic Elements of a First Draft

If you have been using the information in this and the previous chapter step by step to help you develop an assignment, you already have both a formal topic outline and a formal sentence outline to direct your writing. Knowing what a first draft looks like will help you make the creative leap from the outline to the first draft. A first draft should include the following elements:

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

These elements follow the standard five-paragraph essay format, which you probably first encountered in high school. This basic format--introduction, body with multiple paragraphs, and conclusion--is valid for most essays you will write in college, even much longer ones. For now, however, Andi focuses on writing the three body paragraphs from their outline. Section 5.4, "Introduction and Conclusion Paragraphs" covers writing introductions and conclusions, and you will read Andi's introduction and conclusion there.

The Role of Topic Sentences

Topic sentences make the structure of a text and the writer's basic arguments easy to locate and comprehend. In college writing, using a topic sentence in each paragraph of the essay is the standard rule. However, the topic sentence does not always have to be the first sentence in your paragraph even if it the first item in your formal outline (though it should be in workplace writing).

> **Tip**
>
> When you begin to draft your paragraphs, you should follow your outline fairly closely. After all, you spent valuable time developing those ideas. However, as you begin to express your ideas in complete sentences, it might strike you that the topic sentence might work better at the end of the paragraph or in the middle. Try it. Writing a draft, by its nature, is a good time for experimentation.

The topic sentence is generally the first or final sentence in a paragraph. It's possible that it can appear in the middle, but that can be confusing for a reader. Many times it appears as the second sentence in a paragraph is a transition sentence precedes it. The assignment's audience and purpose will often determine where a topic sentence belongs.

Choosing where to position the topic sentence depends not only on your audience and purpose but also on whether you are including counter-arguments. The placement of a topic sentence may vary from paragraph to paragraph depending on the purpose of that particular paragraph and the relation between that purpose and the audience. Please see Section 2.6, "Rhetorical Analysis," and Section 6.1, "Strategies for Developing Paragraphs."

> **Tip**
>
> As you read critically throughout the writing process, keep topic sentences in mind. You may discover topic sentences that are not always located at the beginning of a paragraph. For example, fiction writers customarily use topic ideas, either expressed or implied, to move readers through their texts. In nonfiction writing, such as popular magazines, topic sentences are often used when the author thinks it is appropriate (based on the audience and the purpose, of course). A single topic sentence might even control the development of a number of paragraphs. For more information on topic sentences, please see Chapter 6.

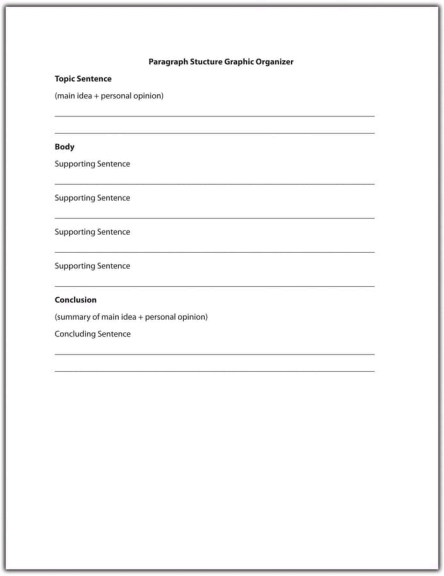
Paragraphs

Learning how to develop a good topic sentence is the first step toward writing a solid paragraph. Once you have composed your topic sentence, you have a guideline for the rest of the paragraph. To complete the paragraph, a writer must support the topic sentence with additional information and summarize the main point with a concluding sentence. This section identifies the three major structural parts of a paragraph and covers how to develop a paragraph using transitional words and phrases.

Identifying Parts of a Paragraph

An effective paragraph contains three main parts: a topic sentence, the body, and the concluding sentence. A topic sentence is often the first sentence of a paragraph. This chapter has already discussed its purpose—to express a main idea combined with the writer's attitude about the subject. The body of the paragraph usually follows, containing supporting details. Supporting sentences help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. The concluding sentence is the last sentence in the paragraph. It reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words. Figure 5.3.1 shows one graphic organizer for paragraph structure.

Figure 5.3.1



Let's look at a fairly casual example. Read the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

> After reading the new TV Guide this week, I had just one thought—why are we still being bombarded with reality shows? This season, the plague of reality television continues to darken our airwaves. Along with the return of viewer favorites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. *Prisoner* follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season, but if any of them are reading this blog—stop it! We've had enough reality television to last us a lifetime!

The first sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It tells the reader that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer's distaste for these shows through the use of the word *bombarded*.

Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It reiterates the main point that viewers are bored with reality television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

Paragraphs that begin with the topic sentence move from the general to the specific. They open with a general statement about a subject (reality shows) and then discuss specific examples (the reality show *Prisoner*). Most academic essays contain the topic sentence at the beginning of the first paragraph.

Now take a look at the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

> Last year, a cat traveled 130 miles to reach its family, which had moved to another state and had left their pet behind. Even though it had never been to their new home, the cat was able to track down its former owners. A dog in my neighborhood can predict when its person is about to have a seizure. It makes sure that he does not hurt himself during an epileptic fit. Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.

This is an inductive paragraph. It begins with details that lead to the point, or main idea. The last sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It draws on specific examples (a cat that tracked down its owners and a dog that can predict seizures) and then makes a general statement that draws a conclusion from these examples (animals' senses are better than humans'). In this case, the supporting sentences are placed before the topic sentence and the concluding sentence is the same as the topic sentence.

This technique is frequently used in persuasive writing. The writer produces detailed examples as evidence to back up his or her point, preparing the reader to accept the concluding topic sentence as the truth.

Sometimes, the topic sentence appears in the middle of a paragraph. Read the following example. The topic sentence is

underlined for you.

> For many years, I suffered from severe anxiety every time I took an exam. Hours before the exam, my heart would begin pounding, my legs would shake, and sometimes I would become physically unable to move. Last year, I was referred to a specialist and finally found a way to control my anxiety—breathing exercises. It seems so simple, but by doing just a few breathing exercises a couple of hours before an exam, I gradually got my anxiety under control. The exercises help slow my heart rate and make me feel less anxious. Better yet, they require no pills, no equipment, and very little time. It's amazing how just breathing correctly has helped me learn to manage my anxiety symptoms.

In this paragraph, the topic sentence expresses the main idea—that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to his main point (breathing exercises can help control anxiety) by using a personal anecdote (how he used to suffer from anxiety). The supporting sentences then expand on how breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The last sentence is the concluding sentence and restates how breathing can help manage anxiety.

Placing a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph is often used in creative writing. If you notice that you have used a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph in an academic essay, read through the paragraph carefully to make sure that it contains only one major topic. You might need to break apart two ideas and develop them separately into two different paragraphs.

The paragraph is the main structural component of an essay as well as other forms of writing. Each paragraph of an essay adds another related main idea to support the writer's thesis, or controlling idea. Each related main idea is supported and developed with facts, examples, and other details that explain it. By exploring and refining one main idea at a time, writers build a strong case for their thesis. For more specific help on developing body paragraphs, please see Section 6.1, "Developing Body Paragraphs."

Paragraph Length

How long should a paragraph be?

One answer to this important question may be "long enough"—long enough for you to address your points and explain your main idea. To grab attention or to present succinct supporting ideas, a paragraph can be fairly short and consist of two to three sentences. A paragraph in a complex essay about some abstract point in philosophy or archaeology can be three-quarters of a page or more in length. As long as the writer maintains close focus on the topic and does not ramble, a long paragraph is acceptable -- and even encouraged-- in college-level writing. In general, try to keep the paragraphs between one-half and three-fourths of a double-spaced page.

> **Tip**
>
> Journalistic style often calls for brief two- or three-sentence paragraphs because of how people read the news, both online and in print. Blogs and other online information sources often adopt this paragraphing style, too. Readers often skim the first paragraphs of a great many articles before settling on the handful of stories they want to read in detail.

You may find that a particular paragraph you write may be longer than one that will hold your audience's interest. In such cases, you should divide the paragraph into two or more shorter paragraphs, adding a topic statement or some kind of transitional word or phrase at the start of the new paragraph. Transition words or phrases show the connection between the two ideas.

In all cases, however, be guided by what you instructor wants and expects to find in your draft. Generally, instructors will expect you to develop a mature college-level style as you progress through the semester's assignments.

> **Exercise 2**
>
> To build your sense of appropriate paragraph length, use the Internet to find examples of the following items. Copy them into a file, identify your sources, and present them to your instructor with your annotations, or notes.
>
> - A news article written in short paragraphs. Take notes on, or annotate, your selection with your observations about the effect of combining paragraphs that develop the same topic idea. Explain how effective those paragraphs would be.

- A long paragraph from a scholarly work that you identify through an academic search engine. Annotate it with your observations about the author's paragraphing style.

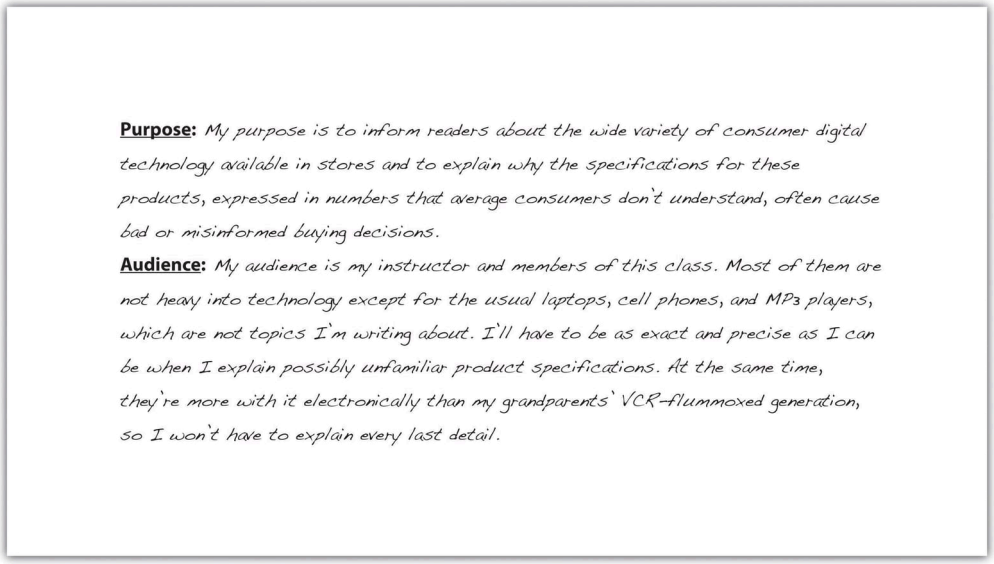
Starting Your First Draft

Now we are finally ready to look over Andi's shoulder as they begin to write their essay about digital technology and the confusing choices that consumers face. Follow along with your own outline, with its thesis statement and topic sentences, and the notes you wrote earlier in this lesson on your purpose and audience. Reviewing these will put both you and Andi in the proper mind-set to start.

The following is Mariah's thesis statement:

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

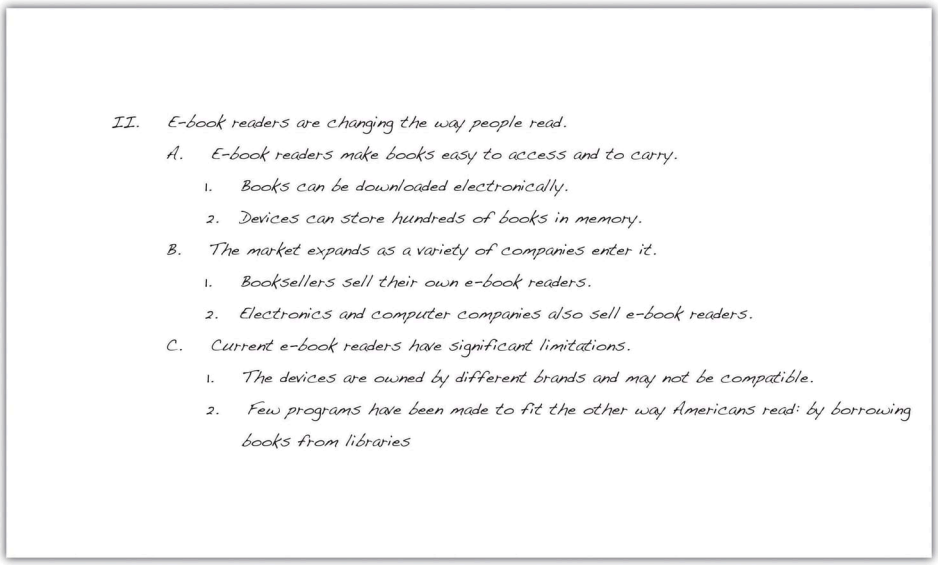
Here are the notes that Andi wrote to themselves to characterize their purpose and audience.


Purpose: My purpose is to inform readers about the wide variety of consumer digital technology available in stores and to explain why the specifications for these products, expressed in numbers that average consumers don't understand, often cause bad or misinformed buying decisions.

Audience: My audience is my instructor and members of this class. Most of them are not heavy into technology except for the usual laptops, cell phones, and MP3 players, which are not topics I'm writing about. I'll have to be as exact and precise as I can be when I explain possibly unfamiliar product specifications. At the same time, they're more with it electronically than my grandparents' VCR-flummoxed generation, so I won't have to explain every last detail.

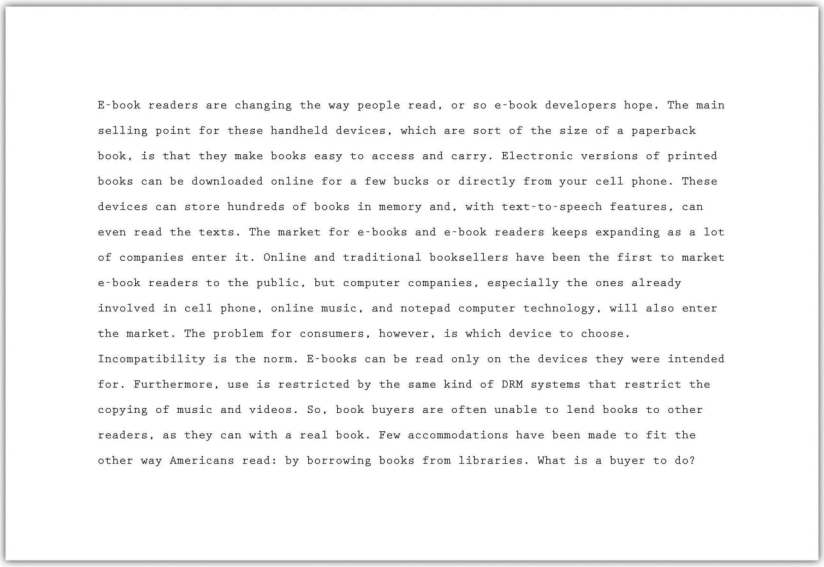
Figure: Andi chose to begin by writing a quick introduction based on their thesis statement, knowing they would improve it during the revision process. Right now, this will just give them a starting point.

Andi then looked at their key sentence outline because it includes the topic sentences. The following is the portion of their outline for the first body paragraph. The Roman numeral II identifies the topic sentence for the paragraph, capital letters indicate supporting details, and Arabic numerals label subpoints.



II. E-book readers are changing the way people read.
A. E-book readers make books easy to access and to carry.
1. Books can be downloaded electronically.
2. Devices can store hundreds of books in memory.
B. The market expands as a variety of companies enter it.
1. Booksellers sell their own e-book readers.
2. Electronics and computer companies also sell e-book readers.
C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.
1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
2. Few programs have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries

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



E-book readers are changing the way people read, or so e-book developers hope. The main selling point for these handheld devices, which are sort of the size of a paperback book, is that they make books easy to access and carry. Electronic versions of printed books can be downloaded online for a few bucks or directly from your cell phone. These devices can store hundreds of books in memory and, with text-to-speech features, can even read the texts. The market for e-books and e-book readers keeps expanding as a lot of companies enter it. Online and traditional booksellers have been the first to market e-book readers to the public, but computer companies, especially the ones already involved in cell phone, online music, and notepad computer technology, will also enter the market. The problem for consumers, however, is which device to choose. Incompatibility is the norm. E-books can be read only on the devices they were intended for. Furthermore, use is restricted by the same kind of DRM systems that restrict the copying of music and videos. So, book buyers are often unable to lend books to other readers, as they can with a real book. Few accommodations have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries. What is a buyer to do?

Tip

If you write your first draft on the computer, consider creating a new file folder for each course with a set of subfolders inside the course folders for each assignment you are given. Label the folders clearly with the course names, and label each assignment folder and word processing document with a title that you will easily recognize. The assignment name is a good choice for the document. Then use that subfolder to store all the drafts you create. When you start each new draft, do not just write over the last one. Instead, save the draft with a new tag after the title—draft 1, draft 2, and so on—so that you will have a complete history of drafts in case your instructor wishes you to submit them. Also, it can be a good idea to use a program, such as Google docs, that stores your files in the cloud. That way, you will still have access to your documents in case something happens to your computer. However, because these many times overwrite your previous work, and the internet or WiFi could have problems, it's also good to save each draft with a separate number on it both in the cloud and on your personal computer.

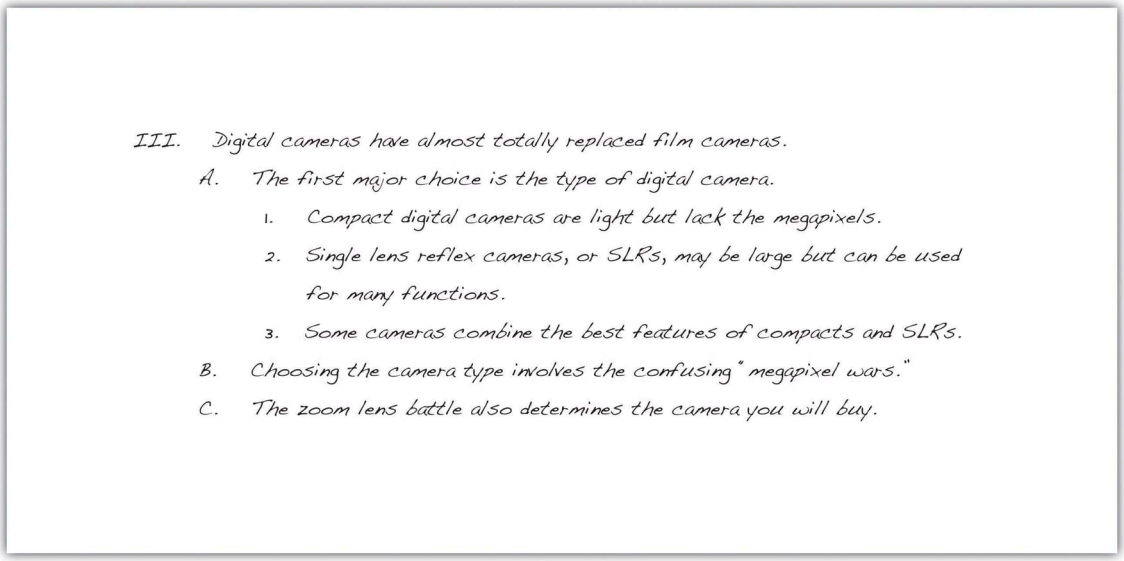
In your documents, observe any formatting requirements (such as MLA formatting) for margins, headers, placement of page numbers, and other layout matters—that your instructor requires.

Continuing the First Draft

Andi continued writing her essay, moving to the second and third body paragraphs. They had supporting details but no numbered subpoints in ther outline, so they had to consult the prewriting notes for specific information to include.

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

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



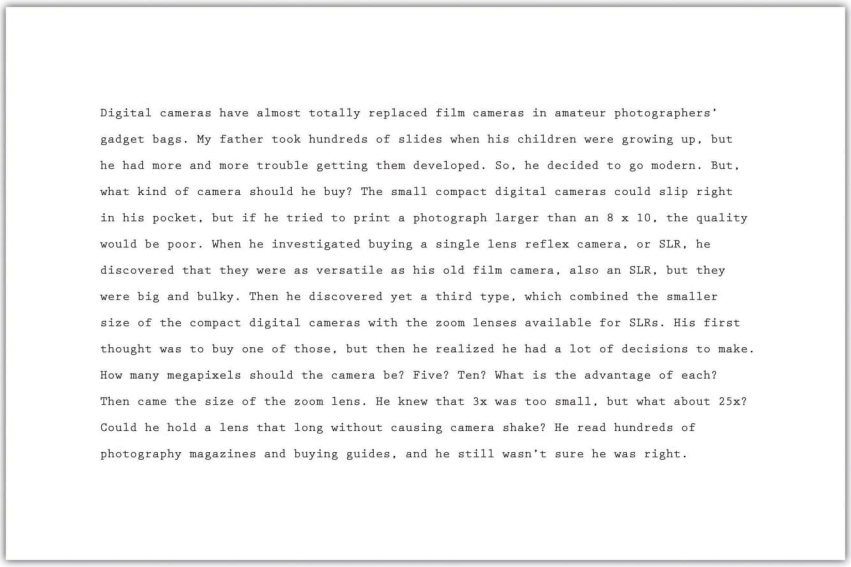
III. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras.

A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.

1. Compact digital cameras are light but lack the megapixels.
2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large but can be used for many functions.
3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts and SLRs.

B. Choosing the camera type involves the confusing "megapixel wars."

C. The zoom lens battle also determines the camera you will buy.



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

Figure:

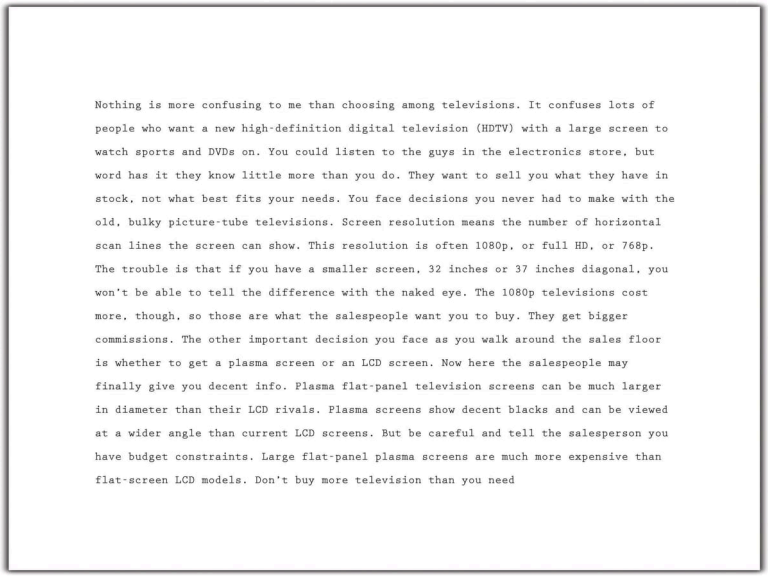
Andi then began the third and final body paragraph using Roman numeral IV from her outline.

IV. Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions.

A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 768p?

B. In the screen-size wars, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?

C. Does every home really need a media center?



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

Figure:

Exercise 3

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

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

Writing a Title

A writer's best choice for a title is one that alludes to the main point of the entire essay. Do not make your title the type of assignment your teacher assigned. Like the headline in a newspaper or the big, bold title in a magazine, an essay's title gives the audience a first peek at the content. If readers like the title, they are likely to keep reading.

After carefully crafting each paragraph of their essay, based on the outline, Andi finished the draft and even included a brief concluding paragraph. They then decided, as the final touch for the writing session, to add an engaging title.

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

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

Contributors and Attributions

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5.4: Writing Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Picture your introduction as a storefront window: You have a certain amount of space to attract your customers (readers) to your goods (subject) and bring them inside your store (discussion). Once you have enticed them with something intriguing, you then point them in a specific direction and try to make the sale (convince them to accept your thesis).

Your introduction is an invitation to your readers to consider what you have to say and then to follow your train of thought as you expand upon your thesis statement.

An introduction serves the following purposes:

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

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

Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph

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

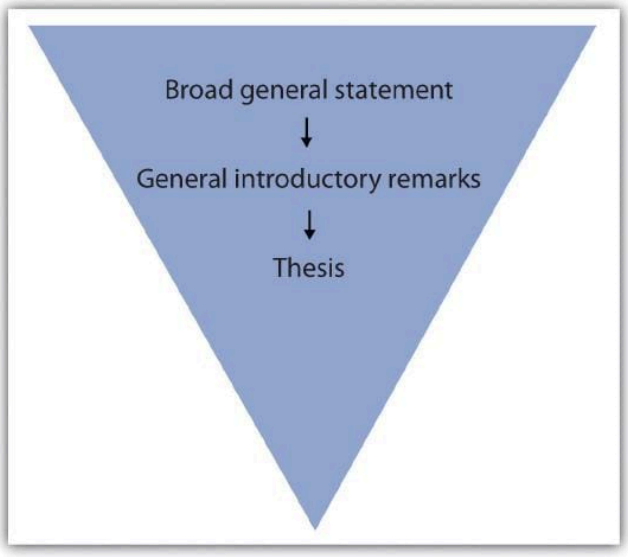

Figure: 9.1: Funnel Techniquefrom @api.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, jot down a few general remarks that you can make about the topic for which you formed a thesis in Section 5.1, "Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement."

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

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

Some other ideas are:

- If the topic is controversial, you can include the current state of the controversy. If there is a lot of history to the topic, you can summarize the history.
- If you are writing a personal essay, you can begin with a brief personal anecdote.
- If you are writing an essay that is focused on one or two works (of literature or nonfiction), you can introduce those works with the title(s), author(s), and brief information about those works.
- Describe a brief event that you think illustrates the overall point you want to make with your essay.
- State an interesting fact that others may not know.
- State a shocking but relevant statistic.
- Compare what people generally think to what the reality is.

The Role of Introductions

Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. Usually when students sit down to respond to an assignment, they have at least some sense of what they want to say in the body of the paper. They might have chosen a few examples or have an idea that will help them answer the main question of your assignment: these sections, therefore, are not as hard to write. But these middle parts of the paper can't just come out of thin air at the reader; they need to be introduced and

concluded in a way that makes sense to the reader.

The introduction and conclusion act as bridges that transport readers from their own lives into the "place" of the writer's analysis. If the readers pick up a paper about education in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass, for example, they need a transition to help them leave behind the world of California, YouTube, e-mail, etc. and to help them temporarily enter the world of nineteenth-century American slavery. By providing an introduction that helps readers make a transition between their own world and the issues in the paper, writers give their readers the tools they need to get into the topic and care about what they are reading. (See this handout on **conclusions**.)

The trick about how general to begin is to think about your audience. Write a first sentence that everyone can both to your topic and they can relate to personally. Now, how you present that topic – be it a question, a humorous statement, an interesting statistic or a shocking fact – depends on what you think is appropriate for your audience.

Image by **Helena Lopes** from **Pexels**

Why Bother Writing a Good Introduction?

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. The opening paragraph of a paper will provide readers with their initial impressions of the argument, the writing style, and the overall quality of work. A vague, disorganized, error-filled, off-the-wall, or boring introduction will probably create a negative impression. On the other hand, a concise, engaging, and well-written introduction will start your readers off thinking highly of the writer, his analytical skills, the writing, and the paper overall.

Your introduction is an important road map for the rest of your paper. The introduction conveys a lot of information to the readers. They are introduced to the topic, why it is important, and how the topic will be discussed and developed. It also introduces your tone and stance about the topic. In most academic disciplines, the introduction should contain a thesis that will assert the main argument. It should also, ideally, give the reader a sense of the kinds of information used to make that argument and the general organization of the paragraphs and pages that will follow. After reading the introduction, readers should not have any major surprises in store when they read the main body of the paper.

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

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

Guidelines: Writing Effective Introductions

1. 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? And what role did education play in the acquisition of freedom? Most importantly, consider the degree to which education was or was not a major force for social change with regard to slavery.

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 set up the question can sometimes give you some ideas for how you might answer it.

2. 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. If you have ever used Google Maps or similar programs, that experience can provide a helpful way of thinking about how broad your opening should be. 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!

3. Try writing your introduction last. You may think that you have to write your introduction first, but that isn't necessarily true, and it isn't always the most effective way to craft a good introduction. You may find that you don't know what you are going to argue at the beginning of the writing process, and only through the experience of writing your paper do you discover your main argument. It is perfectly fine to start out thinking that you want to argue a particular point, but wind up arguing something slightly or even dramatically different by the time you've written most of the paper. The writing process can be an important way to organize your ideas, think through complicated issues, refine your thoughts, and develop a sophisticated argument. However, an introduction written at the beginning of that discovery process will not necessarily reflect what you wind up with at the end. You will need to revise your paper to make sure that the introduction, all of the evidence, and the conclusion reflect the argument you intend. Sometimes it's easiest to just write up all of your evidence first and then write the introduction last—that way you can be sure that the introduction will match the body of the paper and don't run out of time to revise your introduction.

4. 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, but if you are one of those people, be sure to return to your initial introduction later and rewrite if necessary.

5. 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:

- an intriguing example (for example, the mistress who initially teaches Douglass but then ceases her instruction as she learns more about slavery)
- a provocative quotation (Douglass writes that "education and slavery were incompatible with each other")
- 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.)
- 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.")
- 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?)

6. 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.

7. 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?

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 have. If your friend is able to predict the rest of your paper accurately and wants to keep reading, you probably have a good introduction.

Guidelines: Avoiding Less Effective Introductions

1. The place holder introduction. When you don't have much to say on a given topic, it is easy to create this kind of introduction. Essentially, this kind of weaker introduction contains several sentences that are vague and don't really say much. They exist just to take up the "introduction space" in your paper. If you had something more effective to say, you would probably say it, but in the meantime this paragraph is just a place holder. This may what you write just to get yourself writing, but be sure to go back and revise it.

Example: Slavery was one of the greatest tragedies in American history. There were many different aspects of slavery. Each created different kinds of problems for enslaved people.

2. The restated question introduction. Restating the question can sometimes be an effective strategy, but it can be easy to stop at JUST restating the question instead of offering a more specific, interesting introduction to your paper. The professor or teaching assistant wrote your questions and will be reading ten to seventy essays in response to them—thye do not need to read a whole paragraph that simply restates the question. Try to do something more interesting.

Example: Indeed, education has long been considered a major force for American social change, righting the wrongs of our society. The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass discusses the relationship between education and slavery in 19th century America, showing how white control of education reinforced slavery and how Douglass and other enslaved African Americans viewed education while they endured. Moreover, the book discusses the role that education played in the acquisition of freedom. Education was a major force for social change with regard to slavery.

3. The Dictionary introduction. This introduction begins by giving the dictionary definition of one or more of the words in the assigned question. This introduction strategy is on the right track—if you write one of these, you may be trying to establish the important terms of the discussion, and this move builds a bridge to the reader by offering a common, agreed-upon definition for a key idea. You may also be looking for an authority that will lend credibility to your paper. However, anyone can look a word up in the

dictionary and copy down what it says—it may be far more interesting for you (and your reader) if you develop your own definition of the term in the specific context of your class and assignment, or if you use a definition from one of the sources you've been reading for class. Also recognize that the dictionary is also not a particularly authoritative work—it doesn't take into account the context of your course and doesn't offer particularly detailed information. If you feel that you must seek out an authority, try to find one that is very relevant and specific. Perhaps a quotation from a source reading might prove better? Dictionary introductions are also ineffective simply because they are so overused. Many teachers will see twenty or more papers that begin in this way, greatly decreasing the dramatic impact that any one of those papers will have.

Example: Webster's dictionary defines slavery as "the state of being a slave," as "the practice of owning slaves," and as "a condition of hard work and subjection."

4. The "dawn of man" introduction. This kind of introduction generally makes broad, sweeping statements about the relevance of this topic since the beginning of time. It is usually very general (similar to the place holder introduction) and fails to connect to the thesis. You may write this kind of introduction when you don't have much to say—which is precisely why it is ineffective.

Example: Since the dawn of man, slavery has been a problem in human history.

5. The book report introduction. This introduction is what you had to do for your elementary school book reports. It gives the name and author of the book you are writing about, tells what the book is about, and offers other basic facts about the book. You might resort to this sort of introduction when you are trying to fill space because it's a familiar, comfortable format. It is ineffective because it offers details that your reader already knows and that are irrelevant to the thesis.

Example: Frederick Douglass wrote his autobiography, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, in the 1840s. It was published in 1986 by Penguin Books. In it, he tells the story of his life.

Tip

Remember that your diction, or word choice, while always important, is most crucial in your introductory paragraph. Boring diction could extinguish any desire a person might have to read through your discussion. Choose words that create images or express action. For more information on diction, or word choice, see Chapter 11, "Clarity, Conciseness, and Style."

See a student's introduction below with the thesis statement underlined. What do you think of it?

Play Atari on a General Electric brand television set? Maybe watch Dynasty? Or read old newspaper articles on microfiche at the library? Thirty-five years ago, the average college student did not have many options when it came to entertainment in the form of technology. Fast-forward to the twenty-first century, and the digital age has digital technology, consumers are bombarded with endless options for how they do most everything--from buying and reading books to taking and developing photographs. In a society that is obsessed with digital means of entertainment, it is easy for the average person to become baffled. Everyone wants the newest and best digital technology, but the choices are many and the specifications are often confusing.

Tip

If you have trouble coming up with a provocative statement for your opening, it is a good idea to use a relevant, attention-grabbing quote about your topic. Use a search engine to find statements made by historical or significant figures about your subject.

Writing at Work

In your job field, you may be required to write a speech for an event, such as an awards banquet or a dedication ceremony. The introduction of a speech is similar to an essay because you have a limited amount of space to attract your audience's attention. Using the same techniques, such as a provocative quote or an interesting statistic, is an effective way to engage your listeners. Using the funnel approach also introduces your audience to your topic and then presents your main idea in a logical manner.

Exercise 2

Reread each sentence in Andi's introductory paragraph. Indicate which techniques they used and comment on how each sentence is designed to attract the readers' interest.

Image by **Ann H** from **Pexels**

Writing a Conclusion

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

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

Tip

Many times, writers find that they write a stronger main idea at the beginning of a conclusion on their first draft than they wrote initially. Sometimes this main idea would make a better thesis than what you may have originally had.

The Anatomy of a Strong Conclusion

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

Conclusions are almost opposite in structure from introductions. Conclusions generally start off with your main point (a reworded thesis) and then become more general. Many times, in addition to making a final statement about your main ideas, a conclusion will "look to the future" by discussing how the author hopes this topic will be treated in the future. Other times, a conclusion includes a solution if the essay discusses a problem, or what additional study needs to be done about the topic (especially in research papers). It can also discuss how what your essay is about is relevant in other parts of the world or domains of study.

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

Tips:

- When closing your essay, do not expressly state that you are drawing to a close. Relying on statements such as *in conclusion*, *it is clear that*, *as you can see*, or *in summation* is unnecessary and can be considered trite because the reader can obviously see that it's the end of your essay.
- It is wise to avoid doing any of the following in your conclusion:
  - Introducing new material
  - Contradicting your thesis
  - Changing your thesis
  - Using apologies or disclaimers

Introducing new material in your conclusion has an unsettling effect on your reader. When you raise new points, you make your reader want more information, which you could not possibly provide in the limited space of your final paragraph.

Contradicting or changing your thesis statement causes your readers to think that you do not actually have a conviction about your topic. After all, you have spent several paragraphs adhering to a singular point of view. When you change sides or open up your point of view in the conclusion, your reader becomes less inclined to believe your original argument.

By apologizing for your opinion or stating that you know it is tough to digest, you are in fact admitting that even you know what you have discussed is irrelevant or unconvincing. You do not want your readers to feel this way. Effective writers stand by their thesis statement and do not stray from it.

Exercise 35.4.3

On a separate sheet of a paper, restate your thesis from Exercise 2 of this section and then make some general concluding remarks. Next, compose a final emphatic statement. Finally, incorporate what you have written into a strong conclusion paragraph for your essay.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers

Andi incorporates some of these pointers into their conclusion by paraphrasing their thesis statement in the first sentence.

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

Tip

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

Writing at Work

On the job you may sometimes give oral presentations based on research you have conducted. A concluding statement to an oral report contains the same elements as a written conclusion. You should wrap up your presentation by restating the

purpose of the presentation, reviewing its main points, and emphasizing the importance of the material you presented. A strong conclusion will leave a lasting impression on your audience.

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5.5: Key Takeaways

- A thesis statement is your interpretation of the subject, not the topic itself. It should be specific, precise, forceful, confident, and is able to be demonstrated.
- A strong thesis challenges readers with a point of view that can be debated and can be supported with evidence.
- Topic sentences express the main idea of a paragraph combined with the writer's attitude or opinion about the topic, using engaging vocabulary.
- Topic sentence placement depends on the interaction between the purpose of the paragraph, the content, and the audience. In most academic essays, the topic sentence is placed at the beginning of a body paragraph.
- Transitional words and phrases help organize ideas in a paragraph and show how these ideas relate to one another.
- Always be aware of your purpose for writing and the needs of your audience. Cater to those needs in every sensible way.
- Remember to include all the key structural parts of an essay: a thesis statement that is part of your introductory paragraph, three or more body paragraphs as described in your outline, and a concluding paragraph. Then add an engaging title to draw in readers.
- Use your topic outline or your sentence outline to guide the development of your paragraphs and the elaboration of your ideas.
- Generally speaking, write your introduction and conclusion last, after you have fleshed out the body paragraphs.
- A strong opening captures your readers' interest and introduces them to your topic before you present your thesis statement.
- The funnel technique for writing the introduction begins with generalities and gradually narrows your focus until you present your thesis.
- The conclusion should remain true to your thesis statement. It is best to avoid changing your tone or your main idea and avoid introducing any new material.
- Closing with a final emphatic statement provides closure for your readers and makes your essay more memorable.

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6: BODY PARAGRAPHS

6.1: Strategies for Developing Paragraphs
6.2: Types of Support
6.3: Working with Sources- Part I
6.4: Working with Sources- Part II
6.5: Creating Coherence
6.6: Key Takeaways

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6.1: Strategies for Developing Paragraphs

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Developing Paragraphs

If your thesis gives the reader a roadmap to your essay, then body paragraphs should closely follow that map. The reader should be able to predict what follows your introductory paragraph by simply reading the thesis statement. You need to add elaboration and explanation to flesh out the points listed in your outline. Your support (quotes, paraphrases, etc.) will need to answer questions such as "How does my quote support my topic sentence?" Elaboration makes up a large amount of your paragraph, at least two-thirds and is very important to have in order to have a good essay. The body paragraphs present the evidence you have gathered to confirm your thesis. Before you begin to support your thesis in the body, you must find information from a variety of sources that support and give credit to what you are trying to prove.

Select Primary Support for Your Thesis

Without primary support, your argument is not likely to be convincing. Primary support can be described as the major points you choose to expand on your thesis. It is the most important information you select to argue for your point of view. Each point you choose will be incorporated into the topic sentence for each body paragraph you write. Your primary supporting points are further supported by supporting details within the paragraphs.

Tip

Remember that a worthy argument is backed by examples. In order to construct a valid argument, good writers conduct lots of background research and take careful notes. They also talk to people knowledgeable about a topic in order to understand its implications before writing about it.

Identify the Characteristics of Good Support

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

- **Be specific.** The main supporting points for your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be specific. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. These types of examples give

your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, while they convey the necessary information, are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.

- **Be relevant to the thesis.** Support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you need to choose the best support in your body paragraphs. This can be a judgment call, but if you develop your thesis and outline by working with your sources first, this should be easier. Choose your examples wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.
- **Be detailed.** Remember that the body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

Select the Most Effective Primary Support for a Thesis Statement

Remember, in college, you are not limited to just three main subtopics that support your thesis statement. Depending on your assignment, you may examine a topic from many angles and have quite a few topic sentences that related to your thesis. In some cases, you may need to select which subtopics most support your thesis and remove some others. Remind yourself of your main argument, and delete any ideas that do not directly relate to it. Omitting unrelated ideas ensures that you will use only the most convincing information in your body paragraphs. Choose at least three of only the most compelling points. These will serve as the topic sentences for your body paragraphs.

Exercise 1

Refer to the previous exercise and select three of your most compelling reasons to support the thesis statement. Remember that the points you choose must be specific and relevant to the thesis. The statements you choose will be your primary support points, and you will later incorporate them into the topic sentences for the body paragraphs. Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

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.

WRITING AT WORK

In any job where you devise a plan, you will need to support the steps that you lay out. This is an area in which you would incorporate primary support into your writing. Choosing only the most specific and relevant information to expand upon the steps will ensure that your plan appears well-thought-out and precise.

TIP

You can consult a vast pool of resources to gather support for your stance. Citing relevant information from reliable sources ensures that your reader will take you seriously and consider your assertions. Use any of the following credible sources for your essay: newspapers or news organization websites, magazines, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals, which are periodicals that address topics in a specialized field. Please see section 10.5 " Evaluating and Working with Sources."

Draft Supporting Detail Sentences for Each Topic Sentence

After deciding which primary support points you will use as your topic sentences, you must add details to clarify and demonstrate each of those points. These supporting details provide examples, facts, or evidence that support the topic sentence.

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

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

Exercise 2 6.1.1

Using the three topic sentences you composed for the outline you created in Chapter 5, draft at least three supporting details for each point.

Thesis statement: _____

Primary supporting point 1: _____

Supporting details: _____

Primary supporting point 2: _____

Supporting details: _____

Primary supporting point 3: _____

Supporting details: _____

Tips

- You have the option of writing your topic sentences in one of three ways. You can state it at the beginning of the body paragraph, or at the end of the paragraph, or you do not have to write it at all. This is called an implied topic sentence. An implied topic sentence lets readers form the main idea for themselves. For beginning writers, it is best to not use implied topic sentences because it makes it harder to focus your writing. Your instructor may also want to be able to clearly identify the sentences that support your thesis.
- Print out the first draft of your essay and use a highlighter to mark your topic sentences in the body paragraphs. Make sure they are clearly stated and accurately present your paragraphs, as well as accurately reflect your thesis. If your topic sentence contains information that does not exist in the rest of the paragraph, rewrite it to more accurately match the rest of the paragraph.

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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 _____.

PIE Paragraph Development for Body Paragraphs

One strategy for developing paragraphs fully can be memorized by the acronym PIE. The acronym makes it easy to remember the elements needed to fully develop a paragraph in an academic essay. PIE stands for:

Point – (also known as the topic sentence). It is the main idea of your paragraph. It:

- Must be a complete sentence
- Should answer the question "why" or "how"
- Must relate to the thesis
- Must relate to the text you are reading and writing about
- You may need to revise it once you have fully developed your paragraph.

Information -- (quotes, paraphrases, data, and occasionally personal experience). It is the evidence with which you are working. Information includes:

- Support for your point
- Ideas from your reading that you want to discuss and explain further
- Information from a text that you are arguing against
- Two to three pieces of "information" per paragraph (generally)

Note

Never end a paragraph with information!

Explanation/elaboration -- The information that connects you inforamtion to your point, explains and discusses your informaiton and ideas, and connects the paragraph to your thesis.

In a standard deductive paragraph, one sentence of "E" connects your first piece of information to your topic sentence.

Aim for four sentences of explanation after each chunk of "I" in your paragraph.

Questions to ask yourself to help develop your E:

- Why is this important?
- What is the effect of this?
- How does this happen?
- How is the author's opinion different from your opinion or another author's opinion?
- Are there any logical fallacies or emotional appeals in the writer's claim? (If you are arguing against what the writer is saying)
- What is the problem or benefit of thinking about something this way?

In reality, you don't just want just a point, a chunk of information, and explanation. Rather you want to intersperse the information and explanation between the the various reasons that support the topic sentence. Thus, the **real structure of a PIE paragraph** looks something like this:

P (topic sentence)

E (explanation connects I to the P)

I (information)

E (explanation of I – minimum 2 – 3 sentences; connection of last piece of I to next piece of I – 1 sentence)

I (information)

E (explanation of E – minimum 2 – 3 sentences; connection of last piece of I to point of whole paragraph)

****Note: You are not limited to this amount of information or elaboration, but if you develop it well, it should probably be enough for one paragraph.**

Exercise 36.1.1

Identify whether each sentence in the following paragraph is P, I, or E by writing a P, I, or E next to each sentence.

Schools should not prevent students from obtaining lunches even though the administrative records or money is not in place. The effects of doing so are clear in an article that recently appeared on *Vox*. According to the article, during a recent government shutdown "6,300 low-income kids in six states couldn't attend their federally funded Head Start preschools," so the children couldn't receive the meals they would have normally eaten there (Fernandez Campbell). These children may not get anything to eat, their parents may not eat to ensure their kids do, or it comes out of some other essential area

of the parents' very limited budget. This out-of-touch arguing only makes low-income families' lives more difficult. Local governments or charitable organizations should ensure these centers stay open even if the federal government doesn't because the effect on children is detrimental mentally and physically. Even if parents can stay home during the outage, children are in no mood to learn from them if they are hungry, and parents are probably not in the mood to teach when they don't know where their children's next meal is coming from. It's even worse when local school districts themselves don't serve children's lunch meals. According to an article in the *Democrat &* Chronicle, school cashiers routinely refuse to serve food to students if their paperwork isn't in proper order (Murphy). Lunch shaming – when school districts would not serve subsidized lunch to students because either the paperwork wasn't processed or the parents hadn't uploaded their part of the payment online – causes many problems for students. Children aren't in control of what the adults in a district or their parents do, and they should not have to pay a price with their learning. Students can't focus in school if they haven't eaten enough. Because they are uncomfortable and hungry, they are more likely to act out and have discipline problems and they are less likely to learn the lessons of the day. This does not seem to be in line with the mission of schools or in the best interest of students. School districts need to find a better way to manage this and other social situations in order to improve the learning environment.

The following video expands on the idea of elaborating your ideas.

YouTube Video

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Video 6.1.1

Insightful Analysis. **Authored by:** GoReadWriteNow. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube

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6.2: Types of Support

Types of Support

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

The types of support you develop and include in an essay will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you're attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position you might rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. If you are writing an essay based on your observations, you might rely on those observations along with examples and reasons. If you are writing a research essay, you might include more quotations, reasons, and facts. Realize, though, that all types of support are usable in all types of essays, and that you often will have many or all of these types of support within one paragraph. The types of support, depending on the purpose of your essay, can include one or more of the following:

- **Reasons**
  - **Example:** The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.
- **Facts**
  - **Example:** Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.
- **Statistics**
  - **Example:** Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.(citation would be included here)
- **Quotations**
  - **Example:** "We will not allow this situation to continue," stated Senator Johns (citation would be included here).
- **Examples**
  - **Example:** Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of fifty-five.
- **Personal Observations**
  - **Example:** I have known other workers at my current workplace who have been indirectly dismissed through changes in job duties and other tactics that are directed at making them want to retire, or at least leave their current position.
- **Interviews**
  - **Example:** In an interview accessed online, Bill Gates expressed his optimism that privacy and government access of information will be balanced – that it's not an either/or situation.

Here's an example of one body paragraph that uses many types of support:

> **(Topic sentence)** There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. **(Supporting sentence 1: statistic)** First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. **(Supporting sentence 2: fact)** Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. **(Supporting sentence 3: reason)** Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. **(Supporting sentence 4: example)** Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. **(Supporting sentence 5: quotation)** "It's the cheapest car I've ever had," she said. "The running costs are far lower than previous gas powered vehicles I've owned." **(Concluding sentence)** Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

Although it's really useful to understand that there are different types of support, realize that as writers develop support, they

don’t necessarily think in terms of “I need a fact here” or “I need an observation there.” It’s often best to simply write your ideas down in the first stage of developing your support. Conscious consideration of different types of support occurs as you continue to work with and review your support, in terms of your writing purpose and audience.

For example, a research essay that offers only statistics and facts may become boring to your audience if not interspersed with your own interpretations and observations and reasons. A personal observation essay may not get your thesis point across to your audience well if it doesn’t include multiple, specific examples. Draft your support first, and then go back to the draft to develop it further, the second time with your purpose, audience, and types of support more consciously in mind.

Remember that a worthy argument is backed by examples. In order to construct a valid argument, good writers conduct lots of background research and take careful notes. They also talk to people knowledgeable about the topic in order to understand it better, before writing about it.

Finding the Right Kind of Support

To find information for your supporting sentences, you might consider using one of the following sources. Most of these can probably be found in your school's library.

- Reference book
- Encyclopedia
- Website
- Biography/autobiography
- Map
- Dictionary
- Credibly newspaper/magazine
- Interview
- Survey
- Previous experience
- Personal research

To read more about sources and research, see Section 10.4, "Strategies for Gathering Information," and Section 10.5, "Evaluating and Working with Sources."

Tip

When searching for information on the Internet, remember that some websites are more reliable than others. websites ending in .gov or .edu are generally more reliable than websites ending in .com or .org. Wikis and blogs are not generally reliable sources of information because they are subject to inaccuracies and bias.

Identify the Characteristics of Good Primary Support

In order to fulfill the requirements of good primary support, the information you choose must meet the following standards: It should,

- **Be specific.** The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be specific. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. Examples give your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, convey the necessary information, and are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.
- **Be relevant to the thesis.** Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may want to include it all in your body paragraphs. But effective writers resist the temptation to lose focus. Choose your examples wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.
- **Be detailed.** Remember that your thesis, while specific, should not be very detailed. Develop the discussion and detail in the body paragraphs. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

Tip

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

This brief video reinforces the idea of how support develops and is presented in an essay.

YouTube Video

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Video 6.2.1

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Exercise 1 6.2.1

Below you are provided with an audience, purpose, and a topic sentence you want to support. Write down what types of support you would use in this situation to convince your audience.

Audience: A friend

Purpose: Convince them to wear a mask when you go out for a hike together.

Topic Sentence: Masks are key to prevent the spread of COVID 19.

Specific types of support:

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 26.2.1

Below you are provided with an audience, purpose, and a topic sentence you want to support. Write down what types of support you would use in this situation to convince your audience.

Audience: Your manager

Purpose: Convince them to let you take time off during finals.

Topic Sentence: If I can't get extra time off, I may not be able to pass my class.

Specific types of support:

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 36.2.1

Below you are provided with an audience, purpose, and a topic sentence you want to support. Write down what types of support you would use in this situation to convince your audience.

Audience: General public in college (as for an essay)

Purpose: Engage younger people in the democratic process.

Topic Sentence: The voting age should be lowered to 16 in local elections.

Specific types of support:

Answer available at the end of this section.

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Answers

Exercise 1 6.2.1

Collaboration: Compare your answers with a classmate.

Exercise 26.2.1

Collaboration: Compare your answers with a classmate.

Exercise 36.2.1

Collaboration: Compare your answers with a classmate.

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6.3: Working with Sources- Part I

They Say/I Say Approach To Sources

Recall from prior chapters that writing academic papers is about joining a conversation. You're contributing your own original thinking to some complex problem, be it interpretive, theoretical, or practical. Citing sources helps situate your ideas within that ongoing conversation. Sometimes you're citing a research finding that provides strong evidence for your point; at other times you're summarizing someone else's ideas in order to explain how your own opinion differs or to note how someone else's concept applies to a new situation. Graff and Birkenstein[1] encourage you to think about writing with sources is a "They Say/I Say" process. You first report what "they" say ("they" being published authors, prevalent ideas in society at large, or maybe participants in some kind of political or social debate). Then you respond by explaining what you think: Do you agree? Disagree? A little of both?

This "They Say/I Say" approach can help you find balance in your use of sources. On one extreme, some students think that they aren't allowed to make any claims without citing one or more expert authors saying the same thing. When their instructors encourage them to bring more original thinking into their writing, they're confused about how to do it. On the other extreme, some students tend to describe, more or less accurately, what sources say about a topic but then go on to state opinions that seem unrelated to the claims they just summarized. For example, a student writer may draw on expert sources to explain how the prevention and early detection of cancer has saved lives[2] but then argue for more funding for curing advanced cancer without making any explicit link to the points about prevention and screening. On one extreme, the sources are allowed to crowd out original thinking; on the other, they have seemingly no impact on the author's conclusions.

How can you know when you're avoiding both of these extremes? In other words, what kinds of thesis ("I Say") can count as an original claim and still be grounded in the sources ("They Say")? Here are five common strategies:

1. *Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a larger summary argument*. You might find that none of the sources you're working with specifically claim that early 20th century British literature was preoccupied with changing gender roles but that, together, their findings all point to that broader conclusion.
2. *Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a claim about their implications*. You might review papers that explore various factors shaping voting behavior to argue that a particular voting-reform proposal will likely have positive impacts.
3. *Identify underlying areas of agreement*. You may argue that the literature on cancer and the literature on violence both describe the unrecognized importance of prevention and early intervention in order to claim that insights about one set of problems may be useful for the other.
4. *Identify underlying areas of disagreement*. You may find that the controversies surrounding educational reform—and its debates about accountability, curricula, school funding—ultimately stem from different assumptions about the role of schools in society.
5. *Identify unanswered questions*. Perhaps you review studies of the genetic and behavioral contributors to diabetes in order to highlight unknown factors and argue for more in-depth research on the role of the environment.

There are certainly other ways authors use sources to build theses, but these examples illustrate how original thinking in academic writing involves making connections with and between a strategically chosen set of sources.

Incorporating Sources

Here's a passage of academic writing (an excerpt, not a complete paper) that illustrates several ways that sources can figure into a "They Say/I Say" approach[3]:

> Willingham (2011) draws on cognitive science to explain that students must be able to regulate their emotions in order to learn. Emotional self-regulation enables students to ignore distractions and channel their attention and behaviors in appropriate ways. Other research findings confirm that anxiety interferes with learning and academic performance because it makes distractions harder to resist (Perkins and Graham-Bermann, 2012; Putwain and Best, 2011). Other cognitive scientists point out that deep learning is itself stressful because it requires people to think hard about complex, unfamiliar material instead of relying on cognitive short-cuts.

> Kahneman (2011) describes this difference in terms of two systems for thinking: one fast and one slow. Fast thinking is based on assumptions and habits and doesn't require a lot of effort. For example, driving a familiar route or a routine grocery-shopping trip are not usually intellectually taxing activities. Slow thinking, on the other hand, is what we do when we encounter novel problems and situations. It's effortful, and it usually feels tedious and confusing. It is emotionally challenging as well because we are, by definition, incompetent while we're doing it, which provokes some anxiety. Solving a tough problem is rewarding, but the path itself is often unpleasant.
>
> These insights from cognitive science enable us to critically assess the claims made on both sides of the education reform debate. On one hand, they cast doubt on the claims of education reformers that measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education. For example, the Center for Education Reform promotes "the implementation of strong, data-driven, performance-based accountability systems that ensure teachers are rewarded, retained and advanced based on how they perform in adding value to the students who they teach, measured predominantly by student achievement" (http://www.edreform.com/issues/teacher-quality/#what-we-believe). The research that Willingham (2011) and Kahneman (2011) describe suggests that frequent high-stakes testing may actually work against learning by introducing greater anxiety into the school environment.
> At the same time, opponents of education reform should acknowledge that these research findings should prompt us to take a fresh look at how we educate our children. While Stan Karp of Rethinking Schools is correct when he argues that "data-driven formulas [based on standardized testing] lack both statistical credibility and a basic understanding of the human motivations and relationships that make good schooling possible" (www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/26_03/26_03_karp.shtm), it doesn't necessarily follow that all education reform proposals lack merit. Challenging standards, together with specific training in emotional self-regulation, will likely enable more students to succeed.[4]

In that example, the ideas of Willingham and Kahneman are summarized approvingly, bolstered with additional research findings, and then applied to a new realm: the current debate surrounding education reform. Voices in that debate were portrayed as accurately as possible, sometimes with representative quotes. Most importantly, all references were tied directly to the author's own interpretative point, which relies on the quoted claims.

Student Quotation:

I think the most important lesson for me to learn about sources was that the best way to use them is to create a new point. What I mean by this is instead of using them only to back up your points, create your own conclusion from what your sources say. As a psychology major, I look at a lot of data from researchers who have created a conclusion from a meta-analysis (a combination of many studies about the same thing). So that's how I like to think of using sources, I will look at many articles about the same subject and then come up with my own opinion. After using your sources, it is very important to cite them correctly. Personally, I want to be a respected and trustworthy scholar. However, if any of my papers were to be found without proper citations, all of my hard work would be for nothing and people would be wary about the rest of my work.

Aly Button

As you can see, there are times when you should quote or paraphrase sources that you don't agree with or do not find particularly compelling. They may convey ideas and opinions that help explain and justify your own argument. Similarly, when you cite sources that you agree with, you should choose quotes or paraphrases that serve as building blocks within your own argument. Regardless of the role each source plays in your writing, you certainly don't need to find whole sentences or passages that express your thinking. Rather, focus on what each of those sources is claiming, why, and how exactly their claims relate to your own points.

The remainder of this chapter explains some key principles for incorporating sources, principles which follow from the general point that academic writing is about entering an ongoing conversation.

Principle 1: Listen to your Sources

Have you ever had the maddening experience of arguing with someone who twisted your words to make it seem like you were saying something you weren't? Novice writers sometimes inadvertently misrepresent their sources when they quote very minor points from an article or even positions that the authors of an article disagree with. It often happens when students approach their sources with the goal of finding snippets that align with their own opinion. For example, the passage above contains the phrase "measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education." An inexperienced writer might include that quote in a paper without making it clear that the author(s) of the source actually dispute that very claim. Doing

so is not intentionally fraudulent, but it reveals that the paper-writer isn't really thinking about and responding to claims and arguments made by others. In that way, it harms his or her credibility.

Academic journal articles are especially likely to be misrepresented by student writers because their literature review sections often summarize a number of contrasting viewpoints. For example, sociologists Jennifer C. Lee and Jeremy Staff wrote a paper in which they note that high-schoolers who spend more hours at a job are more likely to drop out of school.[5] However, Lee and Staff's analysis finds that working more hours doesn't actually make a student more likely to drop out. Instead, the students who express less interest in school are both more likely to work a lot of hours *and* more likely to drop out. In short, Lee and Staff argue that disaffection with school causes students to drop-out, not working at a job. In reviewing prior research about the impact of work on dropping out, Lee and Staff write "Paid work, especially when it is considered intensive, reduces grade point averages, time spent on homework, educational aspirations, and the likelihood of completing high school"[6]. If you included that quote without explaining how it fits into Lee and Staff's actual argument, you would be misrepresenting that source.

Principle 2: Provide Context

Another error beginners often make is to drop in a quote without any context. If you simply quote, "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham 24), your reader is left wondering who Willingham is, why he or she is included here, and where this statement fits into his or her larger work. The whole point of incorporating sources is to situate your own insights in the conversation. As part of that, you should provide some kind of context the first time you use that source. Some examples:

> Willingham, a cognitive scientist, claims that ...
>
> Research in cognitive science has found that ... (Willingham, 2011).
>
> Willingham argues that "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham 24). Drawing on findings in cognitive science, he explains "..."

As the second example above shows, providing a context doesn't mean writing a brief biography of every author in your bibliography—it just means including some signal about why that source is included in your text.

Even more baffling to your reader is when quoted material does not fit into the flow of the text. For example, a novice student might write,

Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. "We conclude that intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (Lee and Staff 171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

The reader is thinking, who is this sudden, ghostly "we"? Why should this source be believed? If you find that passages with quotes in your draft are awkward to read out loud, that's a sign that you need to contextualize the quote more effectively. Here's a version that puts the quote in context:

Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. Lee and Staff's carefully designed study found that "intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

In this latter example, it's now clear that Lee and Staff are scholars and that their empirical study is being used as evidence for this argumentative point. Using a source in this way invites the reader to check out Lee and Staff's work for themselves if they doubt this claim.

Many writing instructors encourage their students to contextualize their use of sources by making a "quotation sandwich"; that is, introduce the quote in some way and then follow it up with your own words. If you've made a bad habit of dropping in unintroduced quotes, the quotation sandwich idea may help you improve your skills, but in general you don't need to approach every quote or paraphrase as a three-part structure to have well integrated sources. You should, however, avoid ending a paragraph with a quotation. If you're struggling to figure out what to write after a quote or close paraphrase, it may be that you haven't yet figured out what role the quote is playing in your own analysis. If that happens to you a lot, try writing the whole first draft in your own words and then incorporate material from sources as you revise with "They Say/I Say" in mind.

Principle 3: Use Sources Efficiently

Some student writers are in a rut of only quoting whole sentences. Some others get overly enamored of extended block quotes and the scholarly look they give to the page.[7] (A block quote is an indented paragraph of quoted text.) These aren't the worst sins of academic writing, but they get in the way of one of the key principles of writing with sources: shaping quotes and paraphrases efficiently. Efficiency follows from the second principle, because when you fully incorporate sources into your own explicit argument, you zero in on the phrases, passages, and ideas that are relevant to your points. It's a very good sign for your paper when most quotes are short (key terms, phrases, or parts of sentences) and the longer quotes (whole sentences and passages) are clearly justified by the discussion in which they're embedded. Every bit of every quote should feel indispensable to the paper. An overabundance of long quotes usually means that your own argument is undeveloped. The most glowing quotes will not hide that fact from your professor.

Also, some student writers forget that quoting is not the only way to incorporate sources. Paraphasing and summarizing are sophisticated skills that are often more appropriate to use than direct quoting. In fact, in science writing especially, quotes are rarely used. The first two paragraphs of the example passage above do not include any quotations, even though they are both clearly focused on presenting the work of others. Student writers may avoid paraphrasing out of fear of plagiarizing, and it's true that a poorly executed paraphrase will make it seem like the student writer is fraudulently claiming the wordsmithing work of others as his or her own. Sticking to direct quotes seems safer. However, it is worth your time to master paraphasing because it often helps you be more clear and concise, drawing out only those elements that are relevant to the thread of your analysis.

For example, here's a passage from a hypothetical paper with a block quote that is fully relevant to the argument but, nevertheless, inefficient:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman concludes our brains are prone to error:[8]
>
> System 1 registers the cognitive ease with which it processes information, but it does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable. Intuitive answers come to mind quickly and confidently, whether they originate from skills or from heuristics. There is no simple way for System 2 to distinguish between a skilled and a heuristic response. Its only recourse is to slow down and attempt to construct an answer on its own, which it is reluctant to do because it is indolent. Many suggestions of System 1 are casually endorsed with minimal checking, as in the bat-and-ball problem.
>
> While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Even a passage that is important to reference and is well contextualized in the flow of the paper will be inefficient if it introduces terms and ideas that aren't central to the analysis within the paper. Imagine, for example, that other parts of this hypothetical paper use Kahneman's other terms for System 1 (fast thinking) and System 2 (slow thinking); the sudden encounter of "System 1" and "System 2" would be confusing and tedious for your reader. Similarly, the terms "heuristics" and "bat-and-ball problem" might be unfamiliar to your reader. Their presence in the block quote just muddies the waters. In this case, a paraphrase is a much better choice. Here's an example passage that uses a paraphrase to establish the same points more clearly and efficiently:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[9] We have the capacity to stop and examine our assumptions, Kahneman points out, but we often want to avoid that hard work. As a result, we tend to accept our quick, intuitive responses. While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests that the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Not only is the paraphrased version shorter (97 words versus 151), it is clearer and more efficient because it highlights the key ideas, avoiding specific terms and examples that aren't used in the rest of the paper. If other parts of your paper did refer to Kahneman's System 1 and System 2, then you might choose to include some quoted phrases to make use of some of Kahneman's great language. Perhaps something like this:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[10] System 1, Kahneman explains, "does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable." [11] System 2 can stop and examine these assumptions, but it usually wants to avoid

> that hard work. As a result, our quick, intuitive responses are "casually endorsed with minimal checking." [12] While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Whether you choose a long quote, short quote, paraphrase or summary depends on the role that the source in playing in your analysis. The trick is to make deliberate, thoughtful decisions about how to incorporate ideas and words from others.

Paraphrasing, summarizing, and the mechanical conventions of quoting take a lot of practice to master. Numerous other resources explain these practices clearly and succinctly. Bookmark some good sources and refer to them as needed. If you suspect that you're in a quoting rut, try out some new ways of incorporating sources.

Principle 4: Choose Precise Verbs of Attribution

It's time to get beyond the all-purpose "says." And please don't look up "says" in the thesaurus and substitute verbs like "proclaim" (unless there was actually a proclamation) or "pronounce" (unless there was actually a pronouncement). Here's a list of 15 useful alternatives:[13]

- Claims
- Asserts
- Relates
- Recounts
- Complains
- Reasons
- Proposes
- Suggests (if the author is speculating or hypothesizing)
- Contests (disagrees)
- Concludes
- Shows
- Argues
- Explains
- Indicates
- Points out
- Offers

More precise choices like these carry a lot more information than "says", enabling you to relate more with fewer words. For one thing, they can quickly convey what kind of idea you're citing: a speculative one ("postulates")? A conclusive one ("determines")? A controversial one ("counters")? You can further show how you're incorporating these sources into your own narrative. For example, if you write that an author "claims" something, you're presenting yourself as fairly neutral about that claim. If you instead write that the author "shows" something, then you signal to your reader that you find that evidence more convincing. "Suggests" on the other hand is a much weaker endorsement. Saying more with less makes your writing much more engaging.

Student Quotation

Sources are your best friend. They either help you reaffirm your thesis or offer a differing opinion that you can challenge in your paper. The biggest thing to worry about, when it comes to sources, is citing. However, there are a multitude of resources to help you cite properly. My personal favorite is called Knightcite.com. You just pick the type of resource, fill in the information on it and voila, you have a perfectly cited resource!

Kaethe Leonard

Conclusion

Like so many things in adult life, writing in college is often both more liberating and burdensome than writing in high school and before. On the one hand, students have expressed that their high-school experiences made it seem that their own opinions didn't matter in academic writing, and that they can't make any claims that aren't exactly paralleled by a pedigreed quotation. Writing

papers based on their own insights and opinions can seem freeing in contrast. At the same time, a college student attending full time may be expected to have original and well considered ideas about pre-Columbian Latin American history, congressional redistricting, sports in society, post-colonial literatures, and nano-technology, all in about two weeks. Under these conditions, it's easy to see why some would long for the days when simple, competent reporting did the job. You probably won't have an authentic intellectual engagement with every college writing assignment, but approaching your written work as an opportunity to dialog with the material can help you find the momentum you need to succeed with this work.

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6.4: Working with Sources- Part II

How to Incorporate Quotations into Sentences

Basic Quotations

The basic way to write a support sentence with a quote is to introduce the quote with a "signal phrase" and follow it with the appropriate citation (see the following example).

Sentences with quotations have three parts:

1. **Signal phrase** (who said it): Joe said / According to Joe

2. **Quotation** (what was said): “Kawabunga!”

3. **Citation** (where it was said): (36).

Exercise 36.4.1

In the following examples, identify the signal phrase, the quotation, and the citation:

1. Professor Finkelman said, “College is a glorious adventure for those with the bravery to attempt it” (68).
2. The report clearly indicated that we were not meeting our sales quota when it stated, “Revenues for next quarter must be revised downwards” (12).
3. According to the article “Students Who Fold Clothes,” “Part-time work can offer students the best of both worlds” (Chartrand 11).

Citation and Documentation

Citations are done in the same way, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. The author (or the organization if there is no author, or the title of the article if there is no author or organization) should be somewhere either in the signal phrase or the citation. This author, organization, or title should match the entry in the Works Cited page so your reaer can easily find the source if needed.

Purpose of Citation

The purpose of citation is not just to avoid breaking plagiarism "rules." Rather, it's an academic convention that acknowledges the other authors in the conversation into which you are entering. Imagine going into a group of people you don't know and not acknowledging them and just starting to talk. You would probably be asked (maybe rudely) to leave. But if you enter that conversation by acknowledging what others are saying and then adding in your piece, the group is more likely to accept our presence. Citation is kind of like that without some of the same inter-personal issues. In addition, citation provides a service to your reader. They may find something you quoted or paraphrased intriguing and want to know more. You citation tells them where to look it up. It's possible your audience may want to fact-check you. Citations allow that too. They show you are transparent and forthcoming with your sources, which provides you with more credibility.

What to Include in Citations -- Frequently Asked Questions

Do you need to include the author in the citation, and what if there isn't an author?

- If you’ve already introduced the author in the signal phrase, you only need to include the page number in parentheses.

  Example: Ms. Tang says, "This student works best under fairly steady supervision" (77).

- If you have not already included the author's last name in the signal phrase, put the author's last name in the parentheses before the page number.

  Example: According to the article "Balancing College and Cash," "Flexible part-time work can offer students the best of both worlds, but it increases their time-management stress" (Al-Nouri 11).

- If there is no author, and you don't mention the article name in the signal phrase, include it in parentheses.

  Example: According to prisoners and nonprofit organizations, "Rikers' Island prison is a hell hole" (*The Prison from Hell* 3A).

Do I always need to put a page number in parentheses?

Most of the time. If your source is a webpage and has no page numbers, you do not need to include a page number. However, .pdfs online or downloaded from a journal that do have page numbers should include the page number from the .pdf. Almost all printed sources have page numbers.

Where do I put the period?

- If no information is needed in parentheses (i.e., a webpage and you mention the author in the signal phrases), include the period inside the close quotation mark.

  Example: According to Muldoon's blog, "erosion has become a serious problem in the North Sea islands."

- If you do include a citation in parentheses, place a period only after the close parentheses.

  Example: She implores, "We must do something about this" (Muldoon).

(At this point, if your reader wants to know more, they will look up the full bibliographic entry, listed under "Muldoon," on the Works Cited page.)

What if my quote includes a question or exclamation mark at the end?

If your quote includes a question or exclamation mark at the end, include that mark inside the close quotation mark. If your quote is going to have a citation at the end, place a period after the close parentheses. If you do not need to place a citation at the end, you do not need to include any period.

Example: Josie said, "I can't believe what you're telling me!"

Quotation Basics: Why and How to Use Them

Reasons to use quotes:

To give credit to the author (and avoid plagiarism!)

To prove or support your points

To keep the author's interesting word choice

To provide the source for your reader.

How to use use quotes:

- Choose them *AFTER* you have decided what your is.
- Choose them *BECAUSE* they support your point.

OR

- Choose them to help you create your point.
- Put them in the middle of the paragraph, not as a topic sentence or to conclude.
- Follow every quote with an explanation of how it supports your point.

Table 6.4.1 explains how to incorporate quotations into your writing.

Table 6.4.1

How to put quotations into your writing:
1. **Introduce** the quote and who said or wrote it.
2. Incorporate the quote **into a complete sentence** to support your point (the quotation does not have to be a complete sentence though; you can incorporate part of a quoted sentence into your own sentence).
3. **Cite** the **author** and the **page number**.
4. **Analyze** the quote (maybe paraphrase first) and its relevance to your point.

Strategy: PICA (Point, Introduce, Cite, Analyze)

***P**oint*

***I**ntroduce*

***C**ite*

***A**nalyze*

The following example demonstrates how to use this strategy in a body paragraph.

Example

Your point: Students should not just assume they need a four-year degree degree to get to where they want to be.

Introduce: Ben Strickland, senior at the University of Oklahoma, believes in taking a break from the education system to develop a plan. He states, “the truth is this: there is much to be gained by spending time other ways than rigorously studying. College is hardly the only source of education in life. And while you take a break and see the world, college will still be here when you get back-- and, who knows, you might just find a purpose”

Cite: (Robinson 185).

Analyze: It is difficult to do well in school if one doesn’t see the point. If people enjoy and can afford to use school to explore their options, they should, but some fields don’t require a Bachelor’s Degree, and some people prefer to find their interests outside of college.

Exercise 4$6.4.1$

Read a student’s body paragraph below.

- *Where the writer makes their own point, put a **P**.*
- *Where the writer introduces the quote, put an **I**.*
- *Where the writer cites the quote, put a **C**.*

- *Where the writer analyzes the quote, put an **A**.*

Example 1:

Answer available at the end of this section.

What you just read was a paragraph that used two quotes to support its main point, that Malcolm X and Luis Rodriguez both struggled to develop confidence in their ability to write.

As you can see, the quotes are **sandwiched** between the student writer's own words.

Introducing a Quote: Part I

How to incorporate a quote into a grammatically correct sentence:

Use ONE of the following methods:

First method:

- According to Tanzina Vega, "...."

Second method:

- Tanzina Vega, journalist, writes "...."
- Tanzina Vega argues that "..."

First Method

According to Schwartz, "Most of all, we want work that is meaningful — that makes a difference to other people and thus ennobles us in at least some small way" (1).

Second Method

- Carnavale et al **write,** "Our projections suggest that the economy will create 55 million new job openings over the next decade, and 65 percent, or 37 million, of these new job vacancies will require some postsecondary education and training (1).
- Holloway **adds that** "in 2014, Americans outworked several expected other countries, among them Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, Switzerland and Austria, all countries that (coincidentally, I'm so sure) rank higher than us on the most recent World Happiness survey" (1).

Exercise 56.4.1

Observe:

What kind of punctuation comes before the quote? _____

What kind comes after? _____

In the second method, what tense is the verb in? _____

Practice both methods to introduce a quote you will use in your essay:

First method:

Second method:

Incorrect Incorporation of Quotations

Mixing the two above methods:

> According Kali Holloway claims that, "..."

Using strange sentence structure

> In the article by Carnevale et al, it states that...

(Who is "it"? Articles can't "state" things; only writers or speakers can!)

Using the word "quote"

> Robinson quotes, "..."

(Quoting is what you are doing by repeating his words; he is not quoting, but writing.)

Exercise 66.4.1

Correct the three incorrect examples from above

Naming the source as you introduce the quote is also an option the first time you use a source (only). But don't do this to much because it can interrupt the flow of you thought or make the sentence too long to digest.

Examples:

- In "Race, Ethnicity, and the American Labor Market" Roberta Spalter-Roth and Terri Ann Lowenthal **note** that the "Creation of 'ethnic niches' in certain occupations or industries also affects both the desirability and availability of jobs" (5).
- Symonds, Schwartz and Ferguson, in their report, *Pathways to Prosperity*, **argue that** "When young adults fail to successfully complete a post-secondary degree or credential, it is increasingly difficult for them to find an alternative pathway to success through the labor market" (4).
- In his memoir, *It Calls You Back*, Luis Rodriguez **recounts**, "My writing became an obsession. I wrote whenever I had the chance in the midst of all the drama, with rotating shifts and even sixteen-hour days at the mill" (95).

Exercise 76.4.1

Observe

What kind of punctuation or formatting is used with article titles? _____

What kind of punctuation or formatting is used with longer texts like books? _____

What kind of punctuation surrounds the name of each text? _____

What is the subject of each sentence above? 1. _____

2. _____ 3. _____

What verb is each subject "doing"? 1. _____

2. _____ 3. _____

What conclusions can you draw about correct quoting from your observations of subjects and verbs? _____

_____

NOTE: The writer or speaker is usually the subject of a sentence that contains a quote. The verb is usually a present tense action verb like: *writes, states, argues, claims,* etc.

Exercise 86.4.1

Incorporate one of the quotes for your essay correctly using the PICA method and the tips above:

State the POINT your quote supports:

INTRODUCE the quote, its writer or speaker, and the text it comes from:

Insert the quote and CITE it correctly:

ANALYZE its relevance to your point:

Exercise 96.4.1

Find the errors in the citations below and rewrite them correctly: Remember to ask yourself: Who is writing what?

1. As it quotes in Finding Your Element by Ken Robinson, “attitude can be everything” (Robinson 146).

2. According to Mike Rose states, tasks like the diagnosis that a plumber has to make while feeling around blindly inside a wall “don’t typically appear on IQ tests but are manifestations of intelligence” (Rose).

3. In *Finding Your Element* by Ken Robinson it is stated that, “because they have such a narrow view of ability, school systems usually promote a very wide idea of disability” (Robinson 46).

Contributors

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Answers

Exercise 46.4.1

____ Early in their lives, both Malcolm X and Luis Rodriguez were ashamed of their writing skills.

____ Malcolm X wrote and rewrote his letters to his religious mentor, Elijah Muhammad. He describes, “At least twenty-five times I must have written that first one-page letter to him, over and over. I was trying to make it both legible and understandable. I practically couldn’t read my handwriting myself; it shames even to remember it”

____ (X 172).

____ Malcolm X rewrote his letter so many times because his handwriting and his vocabulary embarrassed him (even when he thought about it, years later).

Example 2:

____ Like Malcolm X, Rodriguez had a similar feeling about writing.

____ When his teacher first reads his poetry, Luis says, “Yeah, sure-They are no good, ____ right?” (Rodriguez 218).

____ Rodriguez just assumed his teacher thought his poems were terrible, before she said anything. Even though he had talent, his feelings of shame prevented him from recognizing it. Both writers persisted through their shame and self-doubt to be able to make use of their gifts.

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6.5: Creating Coherence

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Cohesion and Coherence

With a key sentence established, the next task is to shape the body of your paragraph to be both cohesive and coherent. As Williams and Bizup[8] explain, cohesion is about the "sense of flow" (how each sentence fits with the next), while coherence is about the "sense of the whole".[9] Some students worry too much about "flow" and spend a lot of time on sentence-level issues to promote it. We encourage you to focus on underlying structure. For the most part, a text reads smoothly when it conveys a thoughtful and well organized argument or analysis. Focus first and most on your ideas, on crafting an ambitious analysis. The most useful guides advise you to first focus on getting your ideas on paper and then revising for organization and wordsmithing later, refining the analysis as you go. Therefore, we will discuss creating cohesion and coherent paragraphs here as if you already have some rough text written and are in the process of smoothing out your prose to clarify your argument for both your reader and yourself. Deal with cohesion and coherence during the editing--not the drafting--process.

Cohesion refers to the flow from sentence to sentence. For example, compare these passages about how cliques form:

Version A (Which We Rewrote):

> Granovetter begins by looking at balance theory. If an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be tied to each other, according to balance theory (1363).[10] Bridge ties between cliques are always weak ties, Granovetter argues (1364). Weak ties may not necessarily be bridges, but Granovetter argues that bridges will be weak. If two actors share a strong tie, they will draw in their other strong relations and will eventually form a clique. Only weak ties that do not have the strength to draw together all the "friends of friends" can connect people in different cliques.

Version B (The Original By Giuffre):

> Granovetter begins by looking at balance theory. In brief, balance theory tells us that if an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be tied to each other (1363). Granovetter argues that because of this, bridge ties between cliques are always weak ties (1364). Weak ties may not necessarily be bridges, but Granovetter argues that bridges will be weak. This is because if two actors share a strong tie, they will draw in their other strong relations and will eventually form a clique. The only way, therefore, that people in different cliques can be connected

> is through weak ties that do not have the strength to draw together all the "friends of friends." [11]

Version A has the exact same information as version B, but it is harder to read because it is less cohesive. In version B, however, each sentence begins with old information and bridges to new information. Here's Version B again with the relevant parts emboldened:

> Granovetter begins by looking at **balance theory.** In brief, **balance theory** tells us that if an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be **tied** to each other (1363). Granovetter argues that because of this, bridge **ties** between cliques are always **weak ties** (1364). **Weak ties** may not necessarily be **bridges**, but Granovetter argues that **bridges** will be weak. **This is because** if two actors share a **strong tie**, they will draw in their other **strong relations** and will eventually form a **clique**. The only way, therefore, that people in **different cliques** can be connected is through **weak ties** that do not have the strength to draw together all the "friends of friends."

The first sentence establishes the key idea of balance theory. The next sentence begins with balance theory and ends with social ties, which is the focus of the third sentence. The concept of weak ties connects the third and fourth sentences and concept of cliques the fifth and sixth sentences. In Version A, in contrast, the first sentence focuses on balance theory, but then the second sentence makes a new point about social ties *before* telling the reader that the point comes from balance theory. The reader has to take in a lot of unfamiliar information before learning how it fits in with familiar concepts. Version A is coherent, but the lack of cohesion makes it tedious to read.

The lesson is this: if you or others perceive a passage you've written to be awkward or choppy, even though the topic is consistent, try rewriting it to ensure that each sentence begins with a familiar term or concept. If your points don't naturally daisy-chain together like the examples given here, consider numbering them. For example, you may choose to write, "Proponents of the legislation point to four major benefits." Then you could discuss four loosely related ideas without leaving your reader wondering how they relate.

While cohesion is about the sense of flow; coherence is about the sense of the whole. For example, here's a passage that is cohesive (from sentence to sentence) but lacks coherence:

> Your social networks and your location within them shape the kinds and amount of information that you have access to. Information is distinct from data, in that information makes some kind of generalization about a person, thing, or population. Defensible generalizations about society can be either probabilities (i.e., statistics) or patterns (often from qualitative analysis). Such probabilities and patterns can be temporal, spatial, or simultaneous.

Each sentence in the above passage starts with a familiar idea and progresses to a new one, but it lacks coherence—a sense of being about one thing. Good writers often write passages like that when they're free-writing or using the drafting stage to cast a wide net for ideas. A writer weighing the power and limits of social network analysis may free-write something like that example and, from there, develop a more specific plan for summarizing key insights about social networks and then discussing them with reference to the core tenets of social science. As a draft, an incoherent paragraph often points to a productive line of reasoning; one just has to continue thinking it through in order to identify a clear argumentative purpose for each paragraph. With its purpose defined, each paragraph, then, becomes a lot easier to write. Coherent paragraphs aren't just about style; they are a sign of a thoughtful, well developed analysis.

The Wind-Up

Some guides advise you to end each paragraph with a specific concluding sentence, in a sense, to treat each paragraph as a kind of mini-essay. But that's not a widely held convention. Most well written academic pieces don't adhere to that structure. The last sentence of the paragraph should certainly be in your own words (as in, not a quote), but as long as the paragraph succeeds in carrying out the task that it has been assigned by its key sentence, you don't need to worry about whether that last sentence has an air of conclusiveness. For example, consider these paragraphs about the cold fusion controversy of the 1980s that appeared in a best-selling textbook[12]:

> The experiment seemed straightforward and there were plenty of scientists willing to try it. Many did. It was wonderful to have a simple laboratory experiment on fusion to try after the decades of embarrassing attempts to control hot fusion. This effort required multi-billion dollar machines whose every success seemed to be capped with an unanticipated failure. 'Cold fusion' seemed to provide, as Martin Fleischmann said during the course of that famous Utah press conference, 'another route'—the route of little science.

In that example, the first and last sentences in the paragraph are somewhat symmetrical: the authors introduce the idea of accessible science, contrast it with big science, and bring it back to the phrase “little science.” Here’s an example from the same chapter of the same book that does not have any particular symmetry[13]:

> The struggle between proponents and critics in a scientific controversy is always a struggle for credibility. When scientists make claims which are literally ‘incredible’, as in the cold fusion case, they face an uphill struggle. The problem Pons and Fleischmann had to overcome was that they had credibility as electrochemists but not as nuclear physicists. And it was nuclear physics where their work was likely to have its main impact.

The last sentence of the paragraph doesn’t mirror the first, but the paragraph still works just fine. In fact, it serves as a transition into what is likely the focus of the next paragraph. In general, every sentence of academic writing should add some unique content. Don’t trouble yourself with having the last sentence in every paragraph serve as a mini-conclusion. Instead, worry about developing each point sufficiently and making your logical sequence clear.

YouTube Video

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Video 6.5.1

Cohesion & Coherence: College Writing 3.9. **Authored by:** English for Busy Students. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Creating Coherence with Transitions

To ensure continuity within a paragraph a writer must use key terms and also make use of other techniques such as transitions. Transitions ensure that the reader understands what each sentence says and indicate how the sentences and paragraphs are logically related to each other and the “story.” Transitions should be placed at the beginning of a sentence for strongest continuity, usually set off by a comma.

If transitions are missing, the logical relationship between sentences can be unclear and may even be nonexistent. Don't assume your reader knows the relationship between the sentence. The importance of adding transitions is shown in the **following example**:

To determine the effects of lack of lunch on children’s school performance, we examined grades and income measures. We found they were negatively correlated. _____, lack of food makes learning in school more difficult.

The logical relationship between the first and second sentence of this example is not immediately obvious to the reader. Possible transitions that one could fill in between these two sentences include the following:

- To determine the effects of lack of lunch on children’s school performance, we examined grades and income measures. We found they were negatively correlated. **In addition**, lack of food makes learning in school more difficult.
- To determine the effects of lack of lunch on children’s school performance, we examined grades and income measures. We found they were negatively correlated. **Therefore**, lack of food makes learning in school more difficult.
- To determine the effects of lack of lunch on children’s school performance, we examined grades and income measures. We found they were negatively correlated. **On the other hand**, lack of food makes learning in school more difficult.

When the transition is missing between these two sentences, most readers may guess that the intended relationship is “in addition,” when it really is "therefore." But readers should not have to guess. Sometimes readers can come to a very different conclusion than you intend!

Here is another example:

> We determined sensitivity to allergens in children who have pets. We measured children's histamine levels and logged whether they had pets or not.

In the above example, the logical relationship between the first and second sentences is also not clear because a transition is missing. Once the transition is added in, the relationship between the two sentences becomes obvious.

*Revised example*h

> We determined sensitivity to allergens in children who have pets. **To do this,** we measured children's histamine levels and logged whether they had pets or not.

Use transitions to link ideas, but do not overuse them. Certain transitions are outdated or are used in British, but not American, English, such as: hitherto, whilst, and henceforth.

Table 6.5.1 - Common Transitional Words and Phrases

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
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	

Transitions to Use with Supporting & Concluding Sentences

A strong paragraph moves seamlessly from the topic sentence into the supporting sentences and on to the concluding sentence. To help organize a paragraph and ensure that ideas logically connect to one another, writers use transitional words and phrases. A transition is a connecting word that describes a relationship between ideas. Take another look at the earlier example:

> There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependence on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. “It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I’ve owned.” Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

Each of the underlined words is a transition word. Words such as *first* and *second* are transition words that show sequence or clarify order. They help organize the writer’s ideas by showing that they have another point to make in support of the topic sentence. Other transition words that show order include *third*, *also*, and *furthermore*.

The transition word *because* is a transition word of consequence that continues a line of thought. It indicates that the writer will provide an explanation of a result. In this sentence, the writer explains why hybrid cars will reduce dependency on fossil fuels (because they do not require gas). Other transition words of consequence include *as a result*, *so that*, *since*, or *for this reason*.

The following chart provides some useful transition words to connect supporting sentences and concluding sentences.

Table 6.5.2 - Useful Transitional Words and Phrases

For Supporting Sentences					
above all	but	for instance	in particular	moreover	subsequently
also	conversely	furthermore	later on	nevertheless	therefore
aside from	correspondingly	however	likewise	on one hand	to begin with
at the same time	for example	in addition	meanwhile	on the contrary	
For Concluding Sentences					
after all	all things considered	in brief	in summary	on the whole	to sum up

all in all	finally	in conclusion	on balance	thus	

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6.6: Key Takeaways

- Remember to include all the key structural parts of an essay: a thesis statement that is part of your introductory paragraph, three or more body paragraphs as described in your outline, and a concluding paragraph. Then add an engaging title to draw in readersAlways be aware of your purpose for writing and the needs of your audience. Cater to those needs in every sensible way.
- A thesis statement is your interpretation of the subject, not the topic itself. It should be specific, precise, forceful, confident, and able to be demonstrated.
- A strong thesis challenges readers with a point of view that can be debated and can be supported with evidence.
- Topic sentences express the main idea of a paragraph combined with the writer's attitude or opinion about the topic, using engaging vocabulary.
- Topic sentence placement depends on the interaction between the purpose of the paragraph, the content, and the audience. In most academic essays, the topic sentence is placed at the beginning of a paragraph.
- Use your topic outline or your sentence outline to guide the development of your paragraphs and the elaboration of your ideas
- Generally speaking, write your introduction and conclusion last, after you have fleshed out the body paragraphs.
- A strong opening captures your readers' interest and introduces them to your topic before you present your thesis statement.
- The funnel technique for writing the introduction begins with generalities and gradually narrows your focus until you present your thesis.
- The conclusion should remain true to your thesis statement. It is best to avoid changing your tone or your main idea, and avoid introducing any new material.
- Closing with a final emphatic statement provides closure for your readers and makes your essay more memorable.
- Cohesion means how one sentence moves to the next; a sentence should begin with given information and conclude with new information.
- Cohesion can be created with a combination of words related to the topic and transition words.
- Coherence basically means whether a paragraph stays on topic.

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7: REVISING AND EDITING

7.1: Revising and Editing
7.2: Stage 1- The Big Picture
7.3: Stage 2- Fleshing Out Your Ideas
7.4: Stage 3- Sentences, Words, Format
7.5: Proofreading
7.6: How to Say Nothing in 500 Words
7.7: Key Takeaways

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7.1: Revising and Editing

Figure: Image by Pixabay

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

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

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

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

Tip

How do you get the best out of your revisions and editing? Here are some strategies that writers have developed to ensure they look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective. Try them over the course of this semester; then keep using the ones that bring results.

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

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

What is Revision?

Revising is looking for ways to make your ideas clearer, stronger, and more convincing. When revising, you might add, cut, move, or change whole sentences or paragraphs. Revising is far more than just editing because, editing is correcting grammar, style, usage, and punctuation. Revising is really a re-**vision** of your entire essay: ideas, organization, development, grammar, and mechanics. You can follow the steps outlined below while revising.

So, how do you revise? There's one main thing to keep in mind when revising: revise from "big" to "small." There are three main parts to revision which we will be covering in this section which follow the illustration below:

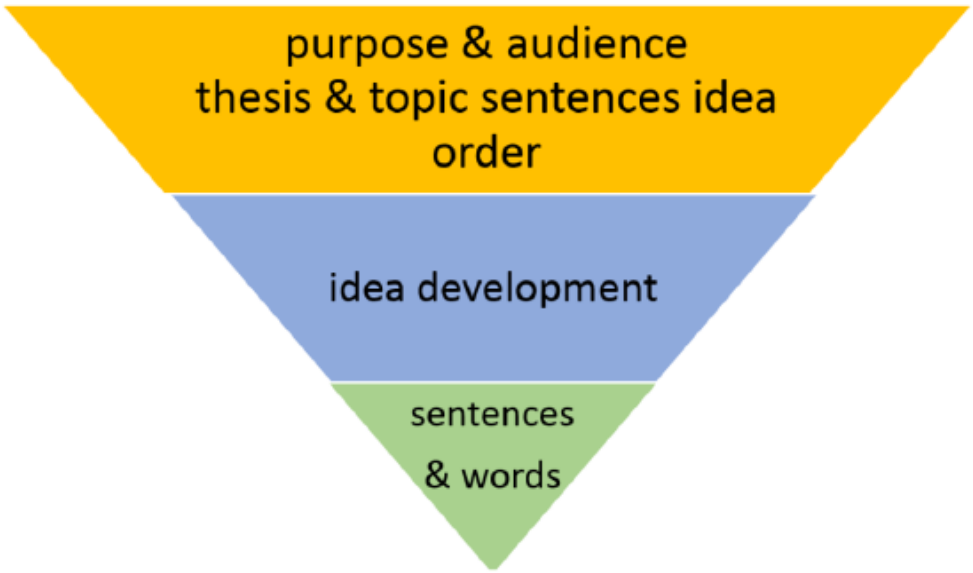


Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Revision Check-list

Directions: Print out a clean copy of the essay you plan to revise. Follow the steps below, marking your revision notes on this clean copy. Your instructor may want you to turn in this draft with revision notes.

Part I: Global Revisions

1. **Revise for unity:** When you revise for unity, you are revising to make sure all of your points are related to your main point—they unite to support your main point. Sometimes it is easy to drift away from your main point, so you want to check each paragraph closely to make sure it is working to prove your thesis. Look for topic sentences that support your thesis. Then examine each paragraph, making sure every single sentence in the paragraph is working to support the topic sentence.

2. **Revise for support, detail, and analysis**: Your support is your primary evidence, your quotes. Your detail is usually included in your explanation portion of your PIE paragraph that helps clarify the relationship of the support to the topic sentence, and your analysis is where you have explained the quote to make it clear to the reader how it supports your point. When revising, you want to make sure you have enough support, detail, and analysis to fully develop your point. Remember that you want to assume your reader is educated, but not necessarily abreast of the topics you are discussing. Mark on your page where you can include more support or better support. Identify how the two quotes relate to each other.

3. **Revise for coherence:** When revising for coherence, you are checking to make sure that all of the support connects to make

a clear, well-developed argument. Coherence is the glue that connects all of the parts together and allows the reader to easily follow the argument. The best way to improve coherence is to add transitions. Transitions are words, phrases, and sentences that connect ideas so that writing moves smoothly from one point to another. Transitions can be used to connect sentences within a paragraph, as well as to connect one paragraph to another.

Part II: Local Revisions—Sentences structure, grammar, syntax, and word choice

Directions: After you have complete all of the global revisions, follow these steps to revise for local issues in your writing.

1. Once you have marked all the grammar errors in your sentences, read through your essay again. This time look for places where you can combine sentences so that your sentence lengths are varied.

2. Read through your essay again, looking for places where you can make the sentence clearer or more concise by using more descriptive language. (Sometimes, if you find the right word, you can say something in one word that originally took you four words.)

3. Now you want to check all of your quotes. Check to make sure you have quoted the text exactly, that you have cited your sources properly, and that you have punctuated your citation correctly.

4. Start with the last sentence of your essay. Read through your entire essay from bottom to top **out loud**, looking at the sentence structure, grammar, and language.

5. If there is a particular grammar issue that you know you struggle with, read through your entire essay once just looking for that one error in your sentences. (Try not to get distracted. Staying focused on one error will really help you catch that particular error.) If you struggle with multiple errors, give each error one full read through from bottom to top.

6. Check your formatting one more time. Have you followed MLA style: 1” margins, double-spaced (even on the first page where you have your name block), page numbers with last name starting on the first page.

Creating Unity and Coherence

Follow your outline closely. That gives a reasonable guarantee that your writing will stay on purpose and not drift away from the controlling idea. Sometimes, when writers are rushed, are tired, or cannot find the right words, their writing may suffer. Their writing may no longer be clear and concise, and they may be adding information that is not needed to develop the main idea.

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

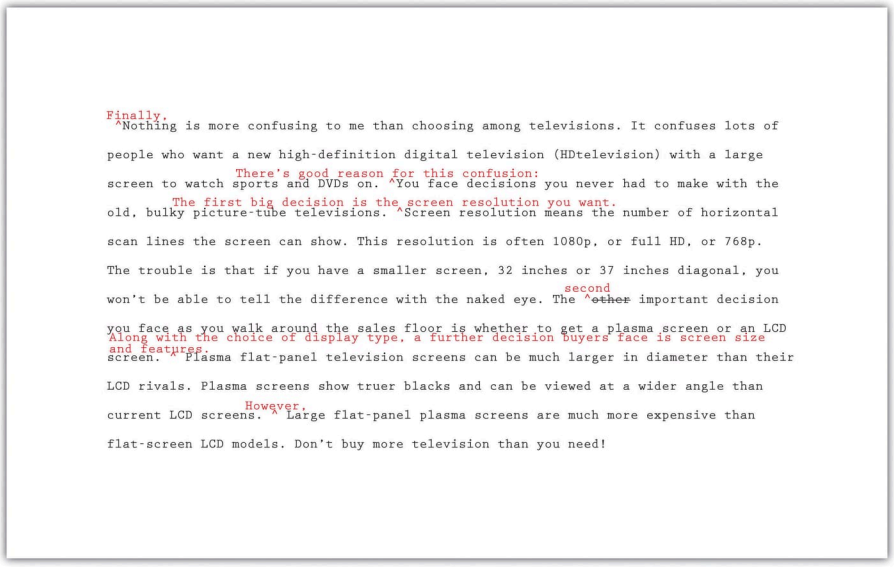
Tip

Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems with unity and coherence. Listen for the clarity and flow of your ideas. Identify places where you find yourself confused, and write a note to yourself about possible fixes. (This is also a good time to give your draft to another person to see if they are confused anywhere.)

Tip

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

Below is an example of a page of Andi's edited essay. They chose to make the changes on paper so they could get a good view of how the whole paper flows together. It is easier to do this on a printed paper than on the computer screen.



Finally,
^Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of

people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDtelevision) with a large

There's good reason for this confusion:
screen to watch sports and DVDs on. ^You face decisions you never had to make with the

The first big decision is the screen resolution you want.
old, bulky picture-tube televisions. ^Screen resolution means the number of horizontal

scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p.

The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you

second
won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The ^~~other~~ important decision

you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD
Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size
and features.
screen. ^ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their

LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than

However,
current LCD screens. ^ Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than

flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need!

Exercise 1

Answer the following questions about Andi's revised paragraph.

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

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

Being Clear and Concise

Some writers are very methodical and painstaking when they write a first draft. Other writers unleash a lot of words in order to get out all that they feel they need to say. Do either of these composing styles match your style? Or is your composing style somewhere in between? No matter which description best fits you, the first draft of almost every piece of writing, no matter its author, can be made clearer and more concise.

If you have a tendency to write too much, you will need to look out 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. More information about style and word choice can also be found in Chapter 11, "Clarity, Conciseness, and Style."

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.

- **Wordy:** There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors.

  Revised: The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.

- **Wordy:** Two extremely famous and well-known consumer advocates spoke eloquently in favor of the proposed important legislation.

Revised: Two well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the proposed legislation.

- **Sentences with deadwood phrases that add little to the meaning.** Be judicious when you use phrases such as *in terms of*, *with a mind to*, *on the subject of*, *as to whether or not*, *more or less*, *as far as…is concerned*, and similar expressions. You can usually find a more straightforward way to state your point.

  Wordy: As a world leader in the field of green technology, the company plans to focus its efforts in the area of geothermal energy.

  A report as to whether or not to use geysers as an energy source is in the process of preparation.

  Revised: As a world leader in green technology, the company plans to focus on geothermal energy.

  A report about using geysers as an energy source is in preparation.

- **Sentences in the passive voice or with forms of the verb** *to be***:** Sentences with passive-voice verbs often create confusion, because the subject of the sentence does not perform an action. Sentences are clearer when the subject of the sentence performs the action and is followed by a strong verb. Use strong active-voice verbs in place of forms of *to be*, which can lead to wordiness. Avoid passive voice when you can. See also "Clarity, Conciseness, and Style."

  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.

- **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.

Exercise 2

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

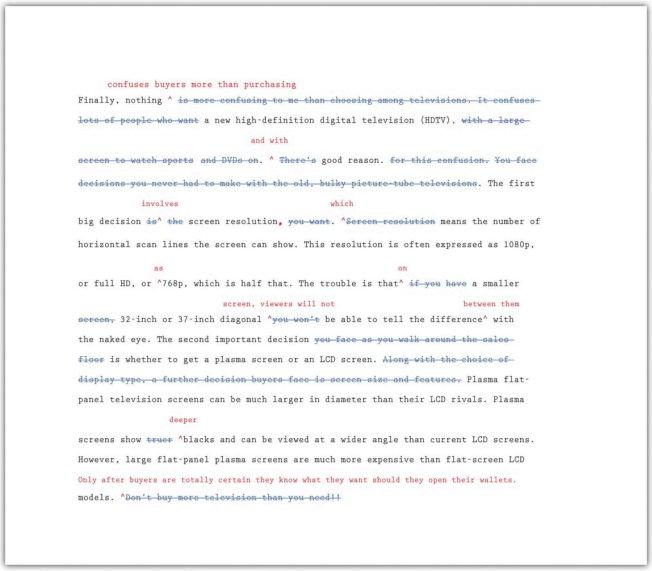
Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

Most college essays should be written in formal English suitable for an academic situation. Follow these principles to be sure that your word choice is appropriate. For more information about word choice and academic style, see Chapter 11.

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

and other vague words. Or use specific details to make your exact meaning clear.

Now read the revisions Andi made to make her third paragraph clearer and more concise. They had already incorporated the changes for improving unity and coherence.



Exercise 3

1. Answer the following questions about Andi's revised paragraph:

A. 1. Read the unrevised and the revised paragraphs aloud. Explain in your own words how changes in word choice have affected Andi's writing.
2. Do you agree with the changes that Andi made to her paragraph? Which changes would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain. What other changes would you have made?
3. What effect does removing contractions and the pronoun *you* have on the tone of the paragraph? How would you characterize the tone now? Why?

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

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 draft to someone they respect and who can give an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses.

You, too, can ask a peer to read your draft when it is ready. After evaluating the feedback and assessing what is most helpful, the reader's feedback will help you when you revise your draft. This process is called peer review.

Reading Your Own Drafts

Writers tend to read over their own papers pretty quickly, with the knowledge of what they are trying to argue already in their minds. Reading in this way can cause you to skip over gaps in your written argument because the gap-filler is in your head. A problem occurs when your reader falls into these gaps. Your reader wants you to make the necessary connections from one thought or sentence to the next. When you don't, the reader can become confused or frustrated. Think about when you read something and you struggle to find the most important points or what the writer is trying to say. Isn't that annoying? Doesn't it make you want to quit reading and surf the web or call a friend?

Reading aloud

If you go to a tutoring session, you will probably hear the tutor say, “We always read papers out loud—would you like to read yours, or would you like to hear me read it?” Reading aloud has many benefits. Most people have far more experience listening to and speaking English than they do reading and editing it on the printed page. When reading your draft out loud or listening to someone else read it, your brain gets the information in a new way, and you may notice things that you didn’t see before.

As listeners, we need the order of ideas in a paper to make sense. We can’t flip back and forth from page to page to try to figure out what is going on or find information we need. When you hear your paper read out loud, you may recognize that you need to re-order the information in it or realize that there are gaps in your explanation. Listeners also need transitions to help us get from one main idea to the next. When you hear your paper, you may recognize places where you have moved from one topic to another too abruptly.

You may also hear errors in your sentences. Sometimes we leave out a word, mess things up as we copy and paste text, or make a grammatical mistake. These kinds of errors can be hard to see on the page, but sentences that contain them are very likely to sound wrong. For native speakers of English (and some non-native speakers, too), reading out loud is one of the most powerful proofreading techniques around.

Sometimes sentences aren’t grammatically incorrect, but they are still awkward in some way—too long, too convoluted, too repetitive. Problems like these are often easily heard. Hearing your paper can also help you get a sense of whether the tone is right. Does it sound too formal? Too chatty or casual? What kind of impression will your voice in this paper make on a reader? Sometimes hearing your words helps you get a more objective sense of the impression you are creating—listening puts in you in something more like the position your reader will be in as he/she moves through your text.

Work with a partner in your class and identify specific ways to strengthen each other’s essays. Although sharing your writing may feel uncomfortable at first, remember that each writer is working towards 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 a peer review session.

This feels a little silly.

Reading aloud (or listening to your writing being read) takes some getting used to, but give it a try. You may be surprised at how much it can speed up your revision process!

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

Video 7.1.1

Three-step revision process. **Authored by:** pattheprofessor. **License:** All Rights Reserved. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Peer Review Comments

Once you have a draft, get a person you trust to read your rough draft, and then ask them to talk to you about what they did and didn’t understand. (Now is not the time to talk about proofreading stuff, so make sure they ignore those issues for the time being). You will likely get one of the following responses or a combination of them:

If your listener/reader has tons of questions about what you are saying, then you probably need to explain more. Let’s say you are writing a paper on piranhas, and your reader says, “What’s a piranha? Why do I need to know about them? How would I identify

one?" Those are vital questions that you clearly need to answer in your paper. You need more detail and elaboration.

If your reader seems confused, you probably need to explain more clearly. So if he says, "Are there piranhas in the lakes around here?" you may not need to give more examples, but rather focus on making sure your examples and points are clear.

If your reader looks bored and can repeat back to you more details than she needs to know to get your point, you probably explained too much. Excessive detail can also be confusing, because it can bog the reader down and keep her from focusing on your main points. You want your reader to say, "So it seems like your paper is saying that piranhas are misunderstood creatures that are essential to South American ecosystems," not, "Uh... piranhas are important?" or, "Well, I know you said piranhas don't usually attack people, and they're usually around 10 inches long, and some people keep them in aquariums as pets, and dolphins are one of their predators, and...a bunch of other stuff, I guess?"

Sometimes it's not the amount of explanation that matters, but the word choice and tone you adopt. Your word choice and tone need to match your audience's expectations. For example, imagine you are researching piranhas; you find an article in National Geographic and another one in an academic journal for scientists. How would you expect the two articles to sound? National Geographic is written for a popular audience; you might expect it to have sentences like "The piranha generally lives in shallow rivers and streams in South America." The scientific journal, on the other hand, might use much more technical language because it's written for an audience of specialists. A sentence like "*Serrasalmus piraya* lives in fresh and brackish intercoastal and proto-arboreal sub-tropical regions between the 45th and 38th parallels" might not be out of place in the journal. Generally, you want your reader to know enough material to understand the points you are making. It's like the old forest/trees metaphor. If you give the reader nothing but trees, she won't see the forest (your thesis, the reason for your paper). If you give her a big forest and no trees, she won't know how you got to the forest (she might say, "Your point is fine, but you haven't proven it to me"). You want the reader to say, "Nice forest, and those trees really help me to see it."

Questions for Peer Review

Title of essay: _____

Date: _____

Writer's name: _____

Peer reviewer's name: _____

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

    a. Point: _____

    Why: _____

    b. Point: _____

    Why: _____

    c. Point: _____

    Why: _____

5. These places in your essay are not clear to me:

    a. Where: _____

    Needs improvement because_____

    b. Where: _____

Needs improvement because _____

c. Where: _____

Needs improvement because _____

6. The one additional change you could make that would improve this essay significantly is _____.

Here is an additional, more specific peer review resource that you may use.

Writing at Work

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

Exercise 4

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

Using Feedback Objectively

The purpose of peer feedback is to receive constructive criticism of your essay.The peer reviewer is your first real audience, and you have the opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so that you can improve your work before sharing the final draft with a wider audience (or your intended audience).

It may not be necessary to incorporate every recommendation your peer reviewer makes. However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to take that feedback into consideration in future assignments. For example, if you read consistent comments about a need for more research, then you may want to consider including more research in future assignments.

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

You might receive feedback from more than one reader. In this situation, you may receive feedback from some readers who do not understand the assignment or who lack your involvement with and enthusiasm for it.

You need to evaluate the responses you receive according to two important criteria:

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

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

Exercise 5

Work with two partners. Go back to Exercises 3 in this lesson and compare your responses to Activity A, about Andi's paragraph, with your partners'. Recall Andi's purpose for writing, and their audience. Then, working individually, discuss where you agree and where you disagree about revision needs.

Proofreading, Editing, and Presentation

In Peer Review, the focus is on the larger content and structural issues, but when you have revised those parts of your paper, it is also important to edit and proofread for sentence structure, grammar, and formatting.

PROOFREADING QUESTIONS

Sentence Structure

Do all of your sentences make sense?

Are they connected with coordinators (FANBOYS) and subordinators to clarify meaning?

Transitions

Have you used additional transition words to help the reader understand how your sentences relate to each other?

Grammar

Have you made sure you implemented what the class has practiced, and what you need to work on?

Vocabulary

Have you used some of the words (especially verbs) you have learned?

Are they used correctly?

Formatting

Have you formatted your paper according to MLA rules?

Is the essay in a folder?

Have you turned in everything your instructor has asked you to turn in? Typically, this may include (from top to bottom

- The final draft
- Feedback Sheet
- Peer Review sheet
- Rough draft
- Outline
- Brainstorm

Formatting

Remember to use the proper format when creating your finished assignment. Sometimes an instructor, a department, or a college, will require students to follow specific instructions on titles, margins, page numbers, or the location of the writer's name. These requirements may be more detailed and rigid for research projects and term papers, which often observe the Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) style guides.

To ensure the format is correct, follow any specific instructions, and make a final check before you submit an assignment.

Reflection

Exercise 6

Use this list to think about the question: **What went well while writing your essay and what gave you trouble?**

HOCs (Higher Order Concerns)

- Understanding the reading
- Summarizing the issue (for the introduction)
- Coming up with the thesis
- Sorting and organizing the information
- Deciding on the topics of the body paragraphs
- Organizing the body paragraphs
  - Writing the topic sentences
  - Including information (details)
  - Incorporating quotations
  - Explaining or interpreting those details
  - Summing up (concluding) the paragraphs
- Writing the conclusion

LOCs (Later Order Concerns)

- Writing clear sentences
- Using subordinators and coordinators (FANBOYS)
- Using transitions to connect ideas
- Checking grammar _____
- Proofreading for spelling and typos
- Formatting (MLA)

Write 1.5 pages (using separate paragraphs) and answer the question at the top of the page.

Also, if something gave you trouble, how did you work on it? Or, what will you do to work on it next time?

The following video offers a quick overview of the revision process, moving from “big” concepts to “small” sentence and language items.

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

Video 7.1.1

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7.2: Stage 1- The Big Picture

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Higher Order Concerns for Revision

Regardless of writers' levels of experience or areas of expertise, many struggle with revision, a component of the writing process that encompasses everything from transformative changes in content and argumentation to minor corrections in grammar and punctuation. Perhaps because revision involves so many forms of modification, it is the focus of most scientific writing guides and handbooks. Revision can be daunting; how does one progress from initial drafts (called "rough drafts" for good reason) to a polished piece of scholarly writing?

Developing a process for revision can help writers produce thoughtful, polished texts and grow their written communication skills. Consider, then, a systematic approach to revision, including strategies to employ at every step of the process.

A System for Approaching Revision

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Generally, revision should be approached in a top-down manner by addressing **higher-order concerns (HOCs)** before moving on to **lower-order concerns (LOCs)**. In writing studies, the term “higher order” is used to denote major or global issues such as thesis, argumentation, and organization, whereas “lower order” is used to denote minor or local issues such as grammar and mechanics.[1] The more analytical work of revising HOCs often has ramifications for the entire piece. Perhaps in refining the argument, a writer will realize that the discussion section does not fully consider the study’s implications. Or, a writer will try a new organizational scheme and find that a paragraph no longer fits and should be cut. Such revisions may have far-reaching implications for the text.

Dedicating time to tweaking wording or correcting grammatical errors is unproductive if the sentence will be changed or deleted. Focusing on HOCs before LOCs allows writers to revise more effectively and efficiently.

Revision Strategies

Bearing in mind the general system of revising from HOCs to LOCs, you can employ several revision strategies.

- **Begin by evaluating how your argument addresses your rhetorical situation**—that is, the specific context surrounding your writing, including the audience, exigence, and constraints.[2]
  - For example, you may write an article describing a new treatment. If the target journal’s audience comes from a variety of disciplines, you may need to include substantial background explanation, consider the implications for practitioners and scholars in multiple fields, and define technical terms. By contrast, if you are addressing a highly specialized audience, you may be able to dispense with many of the background explanations and definitions because of your shared knowledge base. You may consider the implications only for specialists, as they are your primary audience. Because this sort of revision affects the entire text, beginning by analyzing your rhetorical situation is effective.
- **Analyze your thesis or main argument for clarity**.
- **Evaluate the global organization of your text by writing a reverse outline**. Unlike traditional outlines, which are written before drafting, reverse outlines reflect the content of written drafts.
  - In a separate document or in your text’s margins, record the main idea of each paragraph. Then, consider whether the order of your ideas is logical. This method also will help you identify ideas that are out of place or digressive. You may also evaluate organization by printing the text and cutting it up so that each paragraph appears on a separate piece of paper. You may then easily reorder the paragraphs to test different organizational schemes.

Reverse Outlines

Reverse outlines are a great way to see how your actual essay has deviated from your original outline, and also see if the "new"

outline is rigorous with its thesis statements, topic sentences, and supporting details all tying in together.

Process:

Set your draft aside for a while (at least a day) so you can approach revision processes with a fresh mind. First, re-read your draft and consider the draft in the context of your purpose and audience. If the draft doesn't "fit" your writing purpose or audience, you will need to do some major re-thinking and revision.

Then, still on the level of big ideas, consider your thesis and topic sentences to make sure they are thesis and topic sentences, and that they relate to one another. Ask and answer the following questions:

- As a reader, can I clearly identify a thesis and topic sentences?
- Do I actually have a thesis with a topic and an angle/argument/assertion about that topic?
- Do all of my topic sentences and their units of support also have topics and angles, and do my topic sentences relate

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

One method that may help you answer these questions is to annotate your draft and do a reverse outline. Annotation involves noting the main ideas in each section of the essay. Number your paragraphs in the essay. Then make a numbered list and write the main idea of each paragraph, in the order in which the ideas actually occur in your draft, and analyze your list. Questions to ask yourself when analyzing your reverse outline include:

- Are the ideas organized into categories or groups that make sense?
- Is the order of ideas (topic sentences and units of support) logical, given the thesis?
- Are there paragraphs that should be shifted to other locations, because they really relate to different topic sentences and units of support?
- Is there an overall introduction-body-conclusion structure?
- Does the introduction appropriately introduce the topic of the essay, interest a reader, and offer the main idea?
- Does the conclusion re-state the main idea?

The following video explains how to do a reverse outline:

Rachael Cayley's blog entry on Reverse Outlines, mentioned at the end of the video, is a useful resource for information on doing "big" revisions.

The reverse outline mentioned above is also known as a **post-draft outline**. Guidance for how to complete one for an entire essay draft, as well as for an individual problematic paragraph, are found in this presentation.

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7.3: Stage 2- Fleshing Out Your Ideas

Revision Stage 2: Idea Development

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Reverse outlining (from stage 1 of revision) not only helps you with idea structure; it can also help you analyze idea development to determine whether you have the right amount of writing at various places in your essay. If you see multiple main ideas in one paragraph, for example, you may not have given each idea enough development.

As you revise for idea development, make sure you have at least a paragraph–and often more–for each topic sentence idea. Make sure that you have developed your paragraphs and units of support with examples and details appropriate to your purpose and audience. For example, consider the following two paragraphs. What characterizes the well-developed one, which leaves you, as a reader, more satisfied that you have a fuller understanding?

> Traveling to Tokyo was a revelation, especially when compared with traveling to New York City. While New Yorkers are actually polite as a group, New York is dirtier and transportation is less timely. And it's definitely not quiet! On the other hand, Tokyo is ultra-modern in terms of transportation and services. Things run on time. For a large city, it's clean, quiet, and the citizens are polite.

> Traveling to Tokyo was a revelation, especially when compared with traveling to New York City. First of all, Tokyo is ultra-modern in terms of transportation and services. Coming into the airport, we had the option of shipping our bags to our destination, thus avoiding the hassle of hauling luggage and allowing us to take inexpensive public transportation to our hotel. The airport train runs frequently, quickly, and on time; it actually leaves when it's supposed to leave. In the airport as well as in other train stations, there's often a white-gloved and uniformed "conductor" on the station platform to help travelers get to the right track, stand in the right place to board the train, and signal to the train conductor that all travelers have boarded so that the train can depart on time. To board, passengers line up quietly and politely, so that boarding can occur quickly. Within the train, passengers are quiet – a microcosm of what to expect in all public spaces, on the street, in restaurants, in museums, and more. People do not talk loudly or play loud music. Sounds indicating the upcoming station stop are gentle chimes. On the other hand, New York offers a blend of new and old in terms of transportation and services. While the relatively new airport train runs efficiently, there are no special luggage services or persons designated to help travelers. The airport train links to a subway system to get into the heart of New York City, and subway cars are often old, in keeping with the age of the system itself. Boarding may be a challenge if there are a lot of people; no one lines up, but you're still expected to get onto the train quickly. On board, you may experience a blend of sounds ranging from talking to music. Whatever you hear, there's usually no attempt to mute or soften the sound. Stations are announced with loud bells and announcements, a precursor of the sound level you can expect on New York City streets. Yet despite their differences, each city has a special appeal. While Tokyo seems to focus on creating a pleasant public experience, New York is sheer kinetic energy.

Even though the more developed paragraph is relatively long, and might be successfully broken into multiple paragraphs within a unit of support, it includes the following characteristics that make it well-developed:

- clear topic sentence that indicates a comparison of the two cities

- follow-through on the order of the comparison indicated in the topic sentence (whereas the less developed paragraph switches that order)
- multiple examples and details for the points about transportation, sound, and timeliness
- concluding sentence that summarizes and also moves a reader to an additional insight

As noted in the text *The Word on College Reading and Writing*, “here are some tips on what to strive for and what to avoid when it comes to supporting details.” [1]

Good support	**Weak Support**
• Is relevant and focused (sticks to the point). • Is well developed. • Provides sufficient detail. • Is vivid and descriptive. • Is well organized. • Is coherent and consistent. • Highlights key terms and ideas.	• Lacks a clear connection to the point that it’s meant to support. • Lacks development. • Lacks detail or gives too much detail. • Is vague and imprecise. • Lacks organization. • Seems disjointed (ideas don’t clearly relate to each other). • Lacks emphasis of key terms and ideas.

Although the following video focuses on illustrative writing, the concepts offered about idea development can be applied to essay writing for any purpose, including logical argument, research writing, and essays using different patterns of development. The video provides examples of sparsely-developed and well-developed paragraphs, using examples and details:

Writing an Illustrative Paragraph or Essay. **Authored by:** Center for elearning. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Note: Some content in the video “Writing an Illustrative Paragraph or Essay” is presented visually. You may **listen to this video with audio description**.

Revising for Flow of Information

In the first revision stage, revising for idea structure, purpose, and audience, you look at the overall logical order of information to determine if the topic sentences and units of support are in a logical order, given the argument in the thesis. Check to see if you’ve used transition words effectively to show the linkage from one topic sentence and unit of support to the next. This is revising for flow of information on a macro level.

However, you also should revise for flow of information on a micro or paragraph level. Flow on the paragraph level deals with how easily one sentence moves into the next for your reader. The previous page on Revising for Style introduced the concept of “sentence fluency” or flow (see also "Cohesion"); here are examples of good and bad flow in paragraphs, from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles’ writing guides website. Can you tell which paragraph has better flow of information?

1. “Costa Rica is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. The southern part of Costa Rica is characterized by dense rain forests, which contain some of the world’s most unusual wildlife. Hoping to get a bird’s eye view of these animals, tourists take zip lining tours through the top canopy of the rain forest. Located in Central America, it borders Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south. Some of the interesting creatures found in these forests include tree frogs, white-faced monkeys, and sloths.”
2. “Costa Rica is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Located in Central America, it borders Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south. The southern part of Costa Rica is characterized by dense rain forests, which contain some of the world’s most unusual wildlife. Some of the interesting creatures found in these forests include tree frogs, white-faced monkeys, and sloths. Hoping to get a bird’s eye view of these animals, tourists take zip lining tours through the top canopy of the rain forest.” [1]

Paragraph 2 has a better flow. It starts with Costa Rica’s general location, and then moves to a particular location within Costa Rica. The second sentence ends by mentioning “unusual wildlife,” which is a more general lead-in to the third sentence in which the author specifies the wildlife. The fourth sentence links to the third by mentioning “these animals” again, before it moves to talking about tourists.

In contrast, Paragraph 1 hops around from wildlife to tourists to general location to specific wildlife. While the information is the

same, the flow of this paragraph makes it more difficult to read and digest the information.

So, much of the way to revise for flow on the paragraph level is to consider the order and linking of your sentences. However, flow on the paragraph level also deals with sentence structure and how easily the sentences "sound" and can be read.

Here's an example from Daniel's essay in progress. Can you tell which paragraph has the better flow of information?

1. Yet if you look at these arguments one by one, you can see that these skills may be addressed online, albeit in a slightly different way. Public speaking can be taught online because, first of all, online speakers may very well be able to see their audience's reaction and adjust their tone and message accordingly. Skype, Zoom, and other technologies offer real-time, audio and visual experiences that link speaker and audience. Although they are dispersed and not in the same room, the speaker can still see what's going on with other participants and can see from their attitudes and expressions whether they are engaged and whether tone or content needs to be altered. Even in asynchronous environments, audience response may be so immediate that the speaker can respond in almost-real time (think of Rosanne's posts, quick audience reaction on Twitter, and her quick responses). The environment may not be exactly the same as a room with everyone in it, but the skills of observation, situation analysis, and adjustment can still be taught and learned online.
2. Online speakers can learn speaking skills in a slightly different way. Online speakers can see their audience's reaction. Online speakers can use Skype and Zoom. They also have other technologies to see speech attendees. They can see attitudes and expressions. Online speakers can respond in almost-real time. They can learn how to observe. They can learn how to analyze the situation in real time. They can learn to adjust their tone and message accordingly, based on their observations and analyses.

In this example, although the information is almost the same, Paragraph 1 has the best flow. Paragraph 2 is "choppy," because Daiel, at a very initial writing stage, used the same subject-verb sentence structure for all of the sentences in the paragraph. Try to vary your sentence patterns, as well as use transition words, to create an easy flow.

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

As you revise for flow of information within paragraphs, review the following:

- sentence order
- transition use
- sentence structure

Creating Unity

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

Andi stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of her essay she tentatively titled "Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?" But a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset them enough that they digressed from the main topic of their third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store they visited. When revising the essay, they deleted the off-topic sentences that affected the unity of the paragraph.

Read the following paragraph twice, the first time without Andi's changes, and the second time with them.

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

Exercise 1

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

B. Now start to revise the first draft of an essay you have written. Reread it to find any statements that affect the unity of your writing. Decide how best to revise.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Tip

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 cohesion. You may follow this same practice during many stages of the writing process.

Writing at Work

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

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7.4: Stage 3- Sentences, Words, Format

Revision Stage 3: Sentences, Words, Format

Figure: from Amazon AWS

The third and final stage of revision deals with sentence structure, grammar, word choice, spelling, and all aspects of language use and format. Although many beginning writers equate the concept of revision wholly with language use, know that revising for these issues should be the final stage in revision, *after* you have reviewed and verified your thesis, topic sentences, and idea order and development.

Revision stage 3 is often called proofreading which, again, should be the very last step in revising an essay. Really, however, it should be called "editing" because reviewing for word choice and sentence structure should happen before proofreading, which is simply checking for mistakes in grammar, punctuation, and formatting. Once you move to stage 3, it's time to consider lower-order concerns related to sentence structure, punctuation, and language use. Lower-order concerns are issues that don't *necessarily* interrupt understanding of the writing by themselves.

Higher-Order Concerns Revision Stages 1 & 2	**Lower-Order Concerns** Revision Stage 3
Audience	Grammar
Thesis Sentence	Sentence Structure
Topic Sentences	Punctuation
Organization of Ideas	Spelling
Development of Ideas (& citation as needed)	Citation Format

Are Higher-Order Concerns More Important than Lower-Order Concerns?

No, not necessarily. Higher-order concerns tend to interrupt a reader's understanding of the writing, and that's why they need to be addressed first. However, if a lower-order concern becomes a major obstacle, then it naturally becomes a higher priority. For example, consider an essay that uses semi-colons incorrectly, each and every time, where there should be commas. Consider how many times in writing you actually use commas (a lot!). Your reader may start to focus on the error more than the content of your ideas, in the way that a driver and her passengers start to count the potholes they hit on a stretch of road desperately in need of repair. The purpose of proofreading to find and correct lower-order concerns in order to make the road smooth, so that your readers, like the driver, can concentrate on the content of the journey, and not the bumps in the road.

To address lower-order concerns, consider individual sentences in terms of grammar, mechanics, and punctuation. Also consider conventions of citation format, if you have used sources. Ask and answer the following questions:

- Are the sentences grammatically correct?
- Is the sentence structure clear and varied?
- Is language used clearly, in a way appropriate to your reading audience?
- Is the punctuation correct?
- Is the documentation format correct, if the essay uses sources?

Many language items can be revised by isolating and examining different elements of your written text. Read the text sentence by sentence, looking for grammatical and punctuation errors to correct and asking yourself if your sentence structure and word choice are as clear as possible. Remember, a sentence may be grammatically correct and still confuse readers. If you notice a pattern—say, a tendency to misplace modifiers or use unnecessary commas—read the paper looking only for that error so that you can find and correct it throughout. Also realize that spell-checks, even though their useful, do not always replace a close reading for errors. [*The error in the previous sentence is intentional, to prove the point. Can you find it?*]

Revising for Format

Although format is the least important aspect of revising, it's still important that your essay be readable and use certain conventions, such as the following:

- Use 10-12 point size, depending on the font.
- Choose a simple, easy-to-read font (e.g., Calibri, Arial, Times New Roman).
- Use 1-inch margins.
- Check with your instructor about spacing and layout preferences. If you single-space, then left-justify all paragraphs and leave a space between paragraphs; if you double-space, then indent the first line of each paragraph 5 spaces (by using the "Tab" key).
- Put your name and the date in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of the essay.
- Put your last name and page number in the upper right-hand corner of each page of the essay.
- If you're writing a research essay, make sure to use correct citation format.

Revising for Style

The final stage of revising is often focused solely on "correctness": making sure that all the details are right, and that language is used according to the rules. However, revision stage 3 also offers a great opportunity to focus on your style, and allows you to craft the final product that best represents your unique perspective. Note that conscious work with style may help create more sophisticated writing (see "Clarity, Conciseness, and Style").

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

A writer's style is what sets his or her writing apart. Style is the way writing is dressed up (or down) to fit the specific context,

purpose, content, and audience. Word choice, sentence structure, and the writer's voice all contribute to the style of a piece of writing. How a writer chooses words and structures sentences to achieve a certain effect creates a certain style in the writing. When Thomas Paine wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls," he arranged his words to convey a sense of urgency and desperation. Had he written "These are bad times," it's likely he wouldn't have made such an impact.

Style is often considered and discussed within the context of literature. Novelists such as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner and poets such as Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman are well known for their distinctive literary styles. But journalists, scientists, historians, and mathematicians also may have distinctive writing styles. Style depends on both the writer and the context of the writing (the purpose and intended audience). For example, the first-person narrative style of a popular magazine such as *National Geographic* is quite different from the objective, third-person, expository style of a research journal such as *Scientific American* because, although the purpose of each publication is to inform, they are informing different audiences in different contexts.

Not Just Right and Wrong

Style is not a matter of right and wrong but of what is appropriate for a particular purpose, setting, and audience. Consider the following two passages, which were written by the same author on the same topic with the same main idea, yet have very different styles:

> "Experiments show that *Heliconius* butterflies are less likely to ovipost on host plants that possess eggs or egg-like structures. These egg mimics are an unambiguous example of a plant trait evolved in response to a host-restricted group of insect herbivores."
>
> "*Heliconius* butterflies lay their eggs on Passiflora vines. In defense, the vines seem to have evolved fake eggs that make it look to the butterflies as if eggs have already been laid on them." (Example from Myers, G. (1992). Writing biology: Texts in the social construction of scientific knowledge. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. p. 150.)

What changed was the audience. The first passage was written for a professional journal read by other biologists, so the style is authoritative and impersonal, using technical terminology suited to a professional audience. The second passage, written for a popular science magazine, uses a more dramatic style, setting up a conflict between the butterflies and the vines, and using familiar words to help readers from non-scientific backgrounds visualize the scientific concept being described. Each style is appropriate for its particular audience.

Elements of Style

Many elements of writing contribute to an author's style, but three of the most important are word choice, sentence fluency, and voice.

Word choice

Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Most writers strive to be concise and precise, weeding out unnecessary words and choosing the exact word to convey meaning.

Precise words—active verbs, concrete nouns, specific adjectives—help the reader visualize the sentence. No matter what style is appropriate, formal or informal, serious or humorous, clarity and precision are goals to strive for in terms of style. (For specific practice with this, see "Clarity, Conciseness, and Style.")

When you consider word choice, ask yourself if your words convey your main ideas clearly, and if you are you using language that can be understood by your reading audience (most likely an adult, general audience, such as people who read blogs and newspapers).

After you revise for clarity and precision of language, also look at the tone that your words create. Are you intentionally informal, formal, humorous, straightforward? Is your tone appropriate for the context of your writing: your purpose and audience? Are there breeches in tone that are jarring, such as very informal or slang phrases or a sarcastic comment in what is otherwise a piece of writing with a straightforward, professional tone?

Also consider enlivening your word choice. Not every word in an essay can be a “special” word, nor should it be. But if your writing in an area feels a little flat, the injection of a livelier word can have strong rhetorical and emotional impact on your reader. Think of these words as jewels in the right setting. Often swapping out “to be” verbs (e.g., is, was, were, etc.) with more action-packed verbs has immediate, positive impact. Also look for words such as “things,” “very,” or “many,” which you can replace with more precise terminology.

Exercise 1

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

Sentence fluency

Sentence fluency is the flow and rhythm of phrases and sentences. Writers use a variety of sentences with different lengths and rhythms to achieve different effects. They use parallel structures within sentences and paragraphs to reflect parallel ideas, but also know how to avoid monotony by varying their sentence structures. For example, a writer may consciously use a very short sentence in a paragraph to emphasize and draw attention to a particular idea.

When you revise for sentence fluency, consider the patterns of your sentences. Are they all direct subject-verb statements? Or are the sentences varied in pattern? Sentence length variety is an asset to your readers, as it helps maintain their interest. If you find a paragraph or two of your essay that uses many sentences of approximately the same length close together, work in those paragraphs on combining some short sentences or on breaking some long sentences apart.

Also ask yourself if any sentences are wordy, using too many words and phrases in places where much shorter phrases can be used? (e.g., phrases such as “concerning the matter of,” “the reason for,” and “it is a fact that,” or too many “of” or “to” phrases). There is nothing wrong with using repetitive sentence patterns or too many words as a starting point in a draft; the advantage of writing over speaking is that you can return to your sentences and words, rethink them, and revise them for more concise and precise style.

Voice

Voice is an essential element of style that reveals the writer’s personality. A writer’s voice can be impersonal or chatty, authoritative or reflective, objective or passionate, serious or funny. As you consider style when you revise, identify an adjective that you think best describes your voice and ask yourself if this is appropriate for your writing context, purpose, and audience.

How can you consider style consciously?

One method is to read an essay draft out loud, preferably to another person. Better yet, have another person read your draft to you. Note how that person interprets your words. Do they come across as you originally meant them to? If not, revise.

Another method is to simply ignore your essay draft for a few days, and then read it carefully as though you were reading another writer’s work for the first time. Planning some time between drafting and revising helps with all stages of the revising process, including style.

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7.5: Proofreading

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Proofreading: The Final Step

When proofreading, you examine the surface features of your text, such as spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation. You also make sure you use the proper format when creating your finished assignment, including in-text citations and the Works Cited (bibliography) page.

Tip

Proofreading 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..

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

Video 7.5.1

How to Proofread Tutorial: 10 Proofreading Techniques They Didn't Teach You in School. **Authored by:** David Taylor. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

The Importance of Spelling

Word-processing programs usually have a spell-checker, but you should still carefully check for misspellings in your words. This is because automatic spell-checkers may not always understand the **context** of a word, so if a word you used is actually another valid word, a spell-check program won't mark the word as a misspelling.

Misspelling a word might seem like a minor mistake, but it can reflect very poorly on a writer. It suggests one of two things: either the writer does not care enough about his work to proofread it, or he does not know his topic well enough to properly spell words related to it. Either way, spelling errors will make a reader less likely to trust a writer's authority.

The best way to ensure that a paper has no spelling errors is to look for them during the proofreading stage of the writing process. Being familiar with the most common errors will help you find (and fix) them during the writing and proofreading stage.

Sometimes a writer just doesn't know how to spell the word she wants to use. This may be because the word is technical jargon or comes from a language other than her own. Other times, it may be a proper name that she has not encountered before. Anytime you want to use a word but are unsure of how to spell it, do not guess. Instead, check a dictionary or other reference work to find its proper spelling.

Common Spelling Errors

Phonetic Errors

Phonetics is a field that studies the sounds of a language. However, English phonetics can be tricky: In English, the pronunciation of a word does not always relate to the way it is spelled. This can make spelling a challenge. Here are some common phonetic irregularities:

- A word can sound like it could be spelled multiple ways. For example: "concede" and "conceed" are the same phonetically, but only "concede" is the proper spelling.
- A word has silent letters that the writer may forget to include. T the "a" in "realize" is barely audible, but you need it to spell the word correctly.
- A word has double letters that the writer may forget to include. "Accommodate," for example, is frequently misspelled as "acommodate" or "accomodate."
- The writer may use double letters when they are not needed. The word "amend" has only one "m," but it is commonly misspelled with two.

Sometimes, words just aren't spelled the way they sound. "Right," for example, does not resemble its phonetic spelling whatsoever. Try to become familiar with words that have unusual or non-phonetic spellings so you can be on the lookout for them in your writing. But again, the best way to avoid these misspellings is to consult a dictionary whenever you're unsure of the correct spelling. Another thing to do is to keep a list for yourself of the words you know you have trouble with. Look for those words in particular when you proofread.

Homophones

"Bread" and "bred" sound the same but are spelled differently, and they mean completely different things. Two words with different meanings but the same pronunciation are called homophones. If you don't know which homophone is the right one to use, look both up in the dictionary to see which meaning (and spelling) you want. Common homophones include:

- right, rite, wright, and write
- read (most tenses of the verb) and reed
- read (past, past participle) and red
- rose (flower) and rose (past tense of rise)
- carat, caret, and carrot

- to, two, and too
- there, their, and they're
- its and it's

Typographical Errors

Some spelling errors are caused by the writer accidentally typing the wrong thing. Common typos include:

- Omitting letters from a word (typing "brthday" instead of "birthday," for example)
- Adding extra letters (typing "birthdayy")
- Transposing two letters in a word (typing "brithday")
- Spacing words improperly (such as "myb irthday" instead of "my birthday")

Being aware of these common mistakes when writing will help you avoid spelling errors.The Grammar section of this book offers a useful review of grammar, mechanics, and usage. Use it to help eliminate major errors in your writing and refine your understanding of the conventions of language. Do not hesitate to ask for help, too, from peer tutors in your academic department or in the college's writing lab. In the meantime, use this checklist to help you edit your writing.

Checklist

Proofreading Your Writing

Grammar

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

Sentence Structure

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

Punctuation

- Does every sentence end with the correct end punctuation?
- Can I justify the use of every exclamation point?
- Have I used apostrophes correctly to write all singular and plural possessive forms?
- Have I used quotation marks correctly?
- Have I used commas correctly when joining sentence parts together?
- Have I used commas where periods should be?

Mechanics and Usage

- Can I find any spelling errors? How can I correct them?
- Have I used capital letters where they are needed and not capitalized where it's not 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*?

Tips

- 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, sentence by sentence, so they can concentrate on spelling and punctuation. Another helpful technique is to slowly read a paper aloud, paying attention to every word, letter, and punctuation mark.

  If you need additional proofreading help, ask a reliable friend, a classmate, or a peer tutor to make a final pass on your paper to look for anything you missed.

How Can Technology Help?

You don't necessarily need to recruit a friend to read to you. There are a number of text-to-speech software applications and web-based services that will help you get your computer, smartphone, tablet, or e-book reader to read your paper out loud to you. One advantage of this approach is that an automated reader will definitely not cover up any errors for you! You can also control where it starts and stops, speed it up or slow it down, and have it re-read the same paragraph as many times as you want.

If you decide to experiment with this approach, there are many free text readers available. MS Word has a text-to-speech feature built in. Recent Android and iOS phones also have text-to-speech capabilities, which you can find under accessibility settings. You may also find text-to-speech software among your Windows or Mac computer's accessibility features.

If you decide you want to acquire specialized software, "text to speech," "TTS," and "text reader" are search terms that can help you find what is available.

Here are some differences to keep in mind as you choose the best reader for you:

- **Voice quality and selection:** how many voices can you choose from, and how natural do they sound?
- **Controls:** can you determine the speed and pitch of the speaker, where the reading starts and stops, etc.? Is there a pause button?
- **Applicability:** can you convert your text file into an audio file, download it, and listen to it on your phone or music player?
- **Text handling:** does the software highlight each word as it is read (which may be especially helpful for non-native English speakers and students with with learning differences)? Do you need to copy text and paste it into a new window, or can the program work directly within an application (like Word or Powerpoint), or does it just read the text on your screen?
- **Speed:** how many pages of text or words can be converted to voice at once? How quickly does the conversion happen?
- **Type of program:** do you need an active internet connection to use the program, or can you run it without internet access once it has been installed?

While synthetic voices continue to improve, they will likely not sound completely natural to you. But you may find that if you choose a favorite voice, you can get used to its intonation and pacing over time.

Proofreading Advice

The following video features two student tutors from the Writing and Reading Center at Fresno City College. In addition to great guidance about proofreading strategies, they also offer insights about what to expect when working with Writing Center tutors.

YouTube Video

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Proofreading Tip #5: Read Your Papers Aloud BACKWARDS. **Authored by:** FCC Tutors. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

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7.6: How to Say Nothing in 500 Words

Figure: Image by Pixabay

How to Say Nothing in 500 Words By Paul McHenry Roberts

**Note: This essay was written in the 1950s. The basics of good writing, however, haven't changed.

It's Friday afternoon, and you have almost survived another week of classes. You are just looking forward dreamily to the weekend when the English instructor says: "For Monday you will turn in a five hundred word composition on college football." Well, that puts a good hole in the weekend. You don't have any strong views on college football one way or the other. You get rather excited during the season and go to all the home games and find it rather more fun than not. On the other hand, the class has been reading Robert Hutchins in the anthology and perhaps Shaw's "EightyYard Run," and from the class discussion you have got the idea that the instructor thinks college football is for the birds. You are no fool. You can figure out what side to take. After dinner you get out the portable typewriter that you got for high school graduation. You might as well get it over with and enjoy Saturday and Sunday. Five hundred words is about two doublespaced pages with normal margins. You put in a sheet of paper, think up a title, and you're off:

WHY COLLEGE FOOTBALL SHOULD BE ABOLISHED

College football should be abolished because it's bad for the school and also for the players. The players are so busy practicing that they don't have any time for their studies. This, you feel, is a mighty good start. The only trouble is that it's only thirty-two words. You still have four hundred and sixty-eight to go, and you've pretty well exhausted the subject. It comes to you that you do your best thinking in the morning, so you put away the typewriter and go to the movies. But the next morning you have to do your washing and some math problems, and in the afternoon you go to the game. The English instructor turns up too, and you wonder if you've taken the right side after all. Saturday night you have a date, and Sunday morning you have to go to church. (You can't let English assignments interfere with your religion.) What with one thing and another, it's ten o'clock Sunday night before you get out the typewriter again. You make a pot of coffee and start to fill out your views on college football. Put a little meat on the bones.

WHY COLLEGE FOOTBALL SHOULD BE ABOLISHED

> In my opinion, it seems to me that college football should be abolished. The reason why I think this to be true is because I feel that football is bad for the colleges in nearly every respect. As Robert Hutchins says in his article in our anthology in which he discusses college football, it would be better if the colleges had race horses and had races with one another, because then the horses would not have to attend classes. I firmly agree with Mr. Hutchins on this point, and I am sure that many other students would agree too. One reason why it seems to me that college football is bad is that it has become

> too commercial. In the olden times when people played football just for the fun of it, maybe college football was all right, but they do not play college football just for the fun of it now as they used to in the old days. Nowadays college football is what you might call a big business. Maybe this is not true at all schools, and I don't think it is especially true here at State, but certainly this is the case at most colleges and universities in America nowadays, as Mr. Hutchins points out in his very interesting article. Actually the coaches and alumni go around to the high schools and offer the high school stars large salaries to come to their colleges and play football for them. There was one case where a high school star was offered a convertible if he would play football for a certain college. Another reason for abolishing college football is that it is bad for the players. They do not have time to get a college education, because they are so busy playing football. A football player has to practice every afternoon from three to six and then he is so tired that he can't concentrate on his studies. He just feels like dropping off to sleep after dinner, and then the next day he goes to his classes without having studied and maybe he fails the test. (Good ripe stuff so far, but you're still a hundred and fifty-one words from home. One more push.) Also I think college football is bad for the colleges and the universities because not very many students get to participate in it. Out of a college of ten thousand students only seventy-five or a hundred play football, if that many. Football is what you might call a spectator sport. That means that most people go to watch it but do not play it themselves. (Four hundred and fifteen. Well, you still have the conclusion, and when you retype it, you can make the margins a little wider.) These are the reasons why I agree with Mr. Hutchins that college football should be abolished in American colleges and universities.

On Monday you turn it in, moderately hopeful, and on Friday it comes back marked “weak in content” and sporting a big “D.” This essay is exaggerated a little, not much. The English instructor will recognize it as reasonably typical of what an assignment on college football will bring in. He knows that nearly half of the class will contrive in five hundred words to say that college football is too commercial and bad for the players. Most of the other half will inform him that college football builds character and prepares one for life and brings prestige to the school. As he reads paper after paper all saying the same thing in almost the same words, all bloodless, five hundred words dripping out of nothing, he wonders how he allowed himself to get trapped into teaching English when he might have had a happy and interesting life as an electrician or a confidence man. Well, you may ask, what can you do about it? The subject is one on which you have few convictions and little information. Can you be expected to make a dull subject interesting? As a matter of fact, this is precisely what you are expected to do. This is the writer's essential task. All subjects, except sex, are dull until somebody makes them interesting. The writer's job is to find the argument, the approach, the angle, the wording that will take the reader with him. This is seldom easy, and it is particularly hard in subjects that have been much discussed: College Football, Fraternities, Popular Music, Is Chivalry Dead?, and the like. You will feel that there is nothing you can do with such subjects except repeat the old bromides. But there are some things you can do which will make your papers, if not throbbingly alive, at least less insufferably tedious than they might otherwise be.

Avoid the Obvious Content

Say the assignment is college football. Say that you've decided to be against it. Begin by putting down the arguments that come to your mind: it is too commercial, it takes the students' minds off their studies, it is hard on the players, it makes the university a kind of circus instead of an intellectual center, for most schools it is financially ruinous. Can you think of any more arguments, just off hand? All right. Now when you write your paper, make sure that you don' t use any of the material on this list. If these are the points that leap to your mind, they will leap to everyone else's too, and whether you get a “C” or a “D” may depend on whether the instructor reads your paper early when he is fresh and tolerant or late, when the sentence “In my opinion, college football has become too commercial,” inexorably repeated, has bought him to the brink of lunacy. Be against college football for some reason or reasons of your own. If they are keen and perceptive ones, that's splendid. But even if they are trivial or foolish or indefensible, you are still ahead so long as they are not everybody else's reasons too. Be against it because the colleges don't spend enough money on it to make it worthwhile, because it is bad for the characters of the spectators, because the players are forced to attend classes, because the football stars hog all the beautiful women, because it competes with baseball and is therefore unAmerican and possibly Communist-inspired. There are lots of more or less unused reasons for being against college football. Sometimes it is a good idea to sum up and dispose of the trite and conventional points before going on to your own. This has the advantage of indicating to the reader that you are going to be neither trite nor conventional. Something like this: We are often told that college football should be abolished because it has become too commercial or because it is bad for the players. These arguments are no doubt very cogent, but they don't really go to the heart of the matter. Then you go to the heart of the matter.

Take the Less Usual Side

One rather simple way of getting into your paper is to take the side of the argument that most of the citizens will want to avoid. If the assignment is an essay on dogs, you can, if you choose, explain that dogs are faithful and lovable companions, intelligent, useful as guardians of the house and protectors of children, indispensable in police work — in short, when all is said and done, man's best friends. Or you can suggest that those big brown eyes conceal, more often than not, a vacuity of mind and

an inconstancy of purpose; that the dogs you have known most intimately have been mangy, ill-tempered brutes, incapable of instruction; and that only your nobility of mind and fear of arrest prevent you from kicking the flea-ridden animals when you pass them on the street. Naturally personal convictions will sometimes dictate your approach. If the assigned subject is “Is Methodism Rewarding to the Individual?” and you are a pious Methodist, you have really no choice. But few assigned subjects, if any, will fall in this category. Most of them will lie in broad areas of discussion with much to be said on both sides. They are intellectual exercises, and it is legitimate to argue now one way and now another, as debaters do in similar circumstances. Always take the side that looks to you hardest, least defensible. It will almost always turn out to be easier to write interestingly on that side. This general advice applies where you have a choice of subjects. If you are to choose among “The Value of Fraternities” and “My Favorite High School Teacher” and “What I Think About Beetles,” by all means plump for the beetles. By the time the instructor gets to your paper, he will be up to his ears in tedious tales about a French teacher at Bloombury High and assertions about how fraternities build character and prepare one for life. Your views on beetles, whatever they are, are bound to be a refreshing change. Don't worry too much about figuring out what the instructor thinks about the subject so that you can cuddle up with him. Chances are his views are no stronger than yours. If he does have convictions and you oppose him, his problem is to keep from grading you higher than you deserve in order to show he is not biased. This doesn't mean that you should always cantankerously dissent from what the instructor says; that gets tiresome too. And if the subject assigned is “My Pet Peeve,” do not begin, “My pet peeve is the English instructor who assigns papers on 'my pet peeve.”' This was still funny during the War of 1812, but it has sort of lost its edge since then. It is in general good manners to avoid personalities.

Slip Out of Abstraction

If you will study the essay on college football [near the beginning of this essay], you will perceive that one reason for its appalling dullness is that it never gets down to particulars. It is just a series of not very glittering generalities: “football is bad for the colleges,” “it has become too commercial,” “football is big business,” “it is bad for the players,” and so on. Such round phrases thudding against the reader's brain are unlikely to convince him, though they may well render him unconscious. If you want the reader to believe that college football is bad for the players, you have to do more than say so. You have to display the evil. Take your roommate, Alfred Simkins, the secondstring center. Picture poor old Alfy coming home from football practice every evening, bruised and aching, agonizingly tired, scarcely able to shovel the mashed potatoes into his mouth. Let us see him staggering up to the room, getting out his econ textbook, peering desperately at it with his good eye, falling asleep and failing the test in the morning. Let us share his unbearable tension as Saturday draws near. Will he fail, be demoted, lose his monthly allowance, be forced to return to the coal mines? And if he succeeds, what will be his reward? Perhaps a slight ripple of applause when the third-string center replaces him, a moment of elation in the locker room if the team wins, of despair if it loses. What will he look back on when he graduates from college? Toil and torn ligaments. And what will be his future? He is not good enough for pro football, and he is too obscure and weak in econ to succeed in stocks and bonds. College football is tearing the heart from Alfy Simkins and, when it finishes with him, will callously toss aside the shattered hulk. This is no doubt a weak enough argument for the abolition of college football, but it is a sight better than saying, in three or four variations, that college football (in your opinion) is bad for the players. Look at the work of any professional writer and notice how constantly he is moving from the generality, the abstract statement, to the concrete example, the facts and figures, the illustrations. If he is writing on juvenile delinquency, he does not just tell you that juveniles are (it seems to him) delinquent and that (in his opinion) something should be done about it. He shows you juveniles being delinquent, tearing up movie theatres in Buffalo, stabbing high school principals in Dallas, smoking marijuana in Palo Alto. And more than likely he is moving toward some specific remedy, not just a general wringing of the hands. It is no doubt possible to be too concrete, too illustrative or anecdotal, but few inexperienced writers err this way. For most the soundest advice is to be seeking always for the picture, to be always turning general remarks into seeable examples. Don't say, “Sororities teach girls the social graces.” Say, “Sorority life teaches a girl how to carry on a conversation while pouring tea, without sloshing the tea into the saucer.” Don't say, “I like certain kinds of popular music very much.” Say, “Whenever I hear Gerber Sprinklittle play 'Mississippi Man' on the trombone, my socks creep up my ankles.”

Get Rid of Obvious Padding

The student toiling away at his weekly English theme is too often tormented by a figure: five hundred words. How, he asks himself, is he to achieve this staggering total? Obviously by never using one word when he can somehow work in ten. He is therefore seldom content with a plain statement like “Fast driving is dangerous.” This has only four words in it. He takes thought, and the sentence becomes: In my opinion, fast driving is dangerous. Better, but he can do better still: In my opinion, fast driving would seem to be rather dangerous. If he is really adept, it may come out: In my humble opinion, though I do not claim to be an expert on this complicated subject, test driving, in most circumstances, would seem to be rather dangerous in many respects, or at least so it would seem to me. Thus four words have been turned into forty, and not an iota of content has been added. Now this is a way to go about reaching five hundred words, and if you are content with a “D” grade, it is as good a way as any. But if you aim higher, you must work differently. Instead of stuffing your sentences with straw, you must try steadily to get rid of the padding, to make

your sentences lean and tough. If you are really working at it, your first draft will greatly exceed the required total, and then you will work it down, thus: It is thought in some quarters that fraternities do not contribute as much as might be expected to campus life. Some people think that fraternities contribute little to campus life. The average doctor who practices in small towns or in the country must toil night and day to heal the sick. Most country doctors work long hours. When I was a little girl, I suffered from shyness and embarrassment in the presence of others. I was a shy little girl. It is absolutely necessary for the person employed as a marine fireman to give the matter of steam pressure his undivided attention at all times. The fireman has to keep his eye on the steam gauge. You may ask how you can arrive at five hundred words at this rate. Simple. You dig up more real content. Instead of taking a couple of obvious points off the surface of the topic and then circling warily around them for six paragraphs, you work in and explore, figure out the details. You illustrate. You say that fast driving is dangerous, and then you prove it. How long does it take to stop a car at forty and at eighty? How far can you see at night? What happens when a tire blows? What happens in a head-on collision at fifty miles an hour? Pretty soon your paper will be full of broken glass and blood and headless torsos, and reaching five hundred words will not really be a problem.

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Call a Fool a Fool

Some of the padding in freshman themes is to be blamed not on anxiety about the word minimum but on excessive timidity. The student writes, “In my opinion, the principal of my high school acted in ways that I believe every unbiased person would have to call foolish.” This isn't exactly what he means. What he means is, “My high school principal was a fool.” If he was a fool, call him a fool. Hedging the thing about with “inmyopinion's” and “itseemstome's” and “asIseeit's” and “atleastfrommypointofview's” gains you nothing. Delete these phrases whenever they creep into your paper. The student's tendency to hedge stems from a modesty that in other circumstances would be commendable. He is, he realizes, young and inexperienced, and he half suspects that he is dopey and fuzzy-minded beyond the average. Probably only too true. But it doesn't help to announce your incompetence six times in every paragraph. Decide what you want to say and say it as vigorously as possible, without apology and in plain words. Linguistic diffidence can take various forms. One is what we call euphemism. This is the tendency to call a spade “a certain garden implement” or women's underwear “unmentionables.” It is stronger in some eras than others and in some people than others but it always operates more or less in subjects that are touchy or taboo: death, sex, madness, and so on. Thus we shrink from saying “He died last night” but say instead “passed away,” “left us,” “joined his Maker,” “went to his reward.” Or we try to take off the tension with a lighter cliché: “kicked the bucket,” “cashed in his chips,” “handed in his dinner pail.” We have found all sorts of ways to avoid saying mad: “mentally ill,” “touched,” “not quite right upstairs,” “feebleminded,” “innocent,” “simple,” “off his trolley,” “not in his right mind.” Even such a now plain word as insane began as a euphemism with the meaning “not healthy.” Modern science, particularly psychology, contributes many polysyllables in which we can wrap our thoughts and blunt their force. To many writers there is no such thing as a bad schoolboy. Schoolboys are maladjusted or unoriented or misunderstood or in the need of guidance or lacking in continued success toward satisfactory integration of the personality as a social unit, but they are never bad. Psychology no doubt makes us better men and women, more sympathetic and tolerant, but it doesn't make writing any easier. Had Shakespeare been confronted with psychology, “To be or not to be” might have come out, “To continue as a social unit or not to do so. That is the personality problem. Whether 'tis a better sign of integration at the conscious level to display a psychic tolerance toward the maladjustments and repressions induced by one's lack of orientation in one's environment or — ”

But Hamlet would never have finished the soliloquy. Writing in the modern world, you cannot altogether avoid modern jargon. Nor, in an effort to get away from euphemism, should you salt your paper with four-letter words. But you can do much if you will mount guard against those roundabout phrases, those echoing polysyllables that tend to slip into your writing to rob it of its crispness and force.

Beware of Pat Expressions

Other things being equal, avoid phrases like “other things being equal.” Those sentences that come to you whole, or in two or three doughy lumps, are sure to be bad sentences. They are no creation of yours but pieces of common thought floating in the community soup. Pat expressions are hard, often impossible, to avoid, because they come too easily to be noticed and seem too necessary to be dispensed with. No writer avoids them altogether, but good writers avoid them more often than poor writers. By “pat expressions” we mean such tags as “to all practical intents and purposes,” “the pure and simple truth,” “from where I sit,” “the time of his life,” “to the ends of the earth,” “in the twinkling of an eye,” “as sure as you're born,” “over my dead body,” “under cover of darkness,” “took the easy way out,” “when all is said and done,” “told him time and time again,” “parted the best of friends,” “stand up and be counted,” “gave him the best years of her life,” “worked her fingers to the bone.” Like other clichés, these expressions were once forceful. Now we should use them only when we can't possibly think of anything else. Some pat expressions stand like a wall between the writer and thought. Such a one is “the American way of life.” Many student writers feel that when they have said that something accords with the American way of life or does not they have exhausted the subject. Actually, they have stopped at the highest level of abstraction. The American way of life is the complicated set of bonds between a hundred and eighty million ways. All of us know this when we think about it, but the tag phrase too often keeps us from thinking about it. So with many another phrase dear to the politician: “this great land of ours,” “the man in the street,” “our national heritage.” These may prove our patriotism or give a clue to our political beliefs, but otherwise they add nothing to the paper except words.

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Colorful Words

The writer builds with words, and no builder uses a raw material more slippery and elusive and treacherous. A writer's work is a constant struggle to get the right word in the right place, to find that particular word that will convey his meaning exactly, that will persuade the reader or soothe him or startle or amuse him. He never succeeds altogether — sometimes he feels that he scarcely succeeds at all — but such successes as he has are what make the thing worth doing. There is no book of rules for this game. One progresses through everlasting experiment on the basis of everwidening experience. There are few useful generalizations that one can make about words as words, but there are perhaps a few. Some words are what we call “colorful.” By this we mean that they are calculated to produce a picture or induce an emotion. They are dressy instead of plain, specific instead of general, loud instead of soft. Thus, in place of “Her heart beat,” we may write, “her heart pounded, throbbed, fluttered, danced.” Instead of “He sat in his chair,” we may say, “he lounged, sprawled, coiled.” Instead of “It was hot,” we may say, “It was blistering, sultry, muggy, suffocating, steamy, wilting.” However, it should not be supposed that the fancy word is always better. Often it is as well to write

“Her heart beat” or “It was hot” if that is all it did or all it was. Ages differ in how they like their prose. The nineteenth century liked it rich and smoky. The twentieth has usually preferred it lean and cool. The twentieth century writer, like all writers, is forever seeking the exact word, but he is wary of sounding feverish. He tends to pitch it low, to understate it, to throw it away. He knows that if he gets too colorful, the audience is likely to giggle. See how this strikes you: “As the rich, golden glow of the sunset died away along the eternal western hills, Angela's limpid blue eyes looked softly and trustingly into Montague's flashing brown ones, and her heart pounded like a drum in time with the joyous song surging in her soul.” Some people like that sort of thing, but most modern readers would say, “Good grief,” and turn on the television.

Colored Words

Some words we would call not so much colorful as colored — that is, loaded with associations, good or bad. All words — except perhaps structure words — have associations of some sort. We have said that the meaning of a word is the sum of the contexts in which it occurs. When we hear a word, we hear with it an echo of all the situations in which we have heard it before. In some words, these echoes are obvious and discussible. The word mother, for example, has, for most people, agreeable associations. When you hear mother you probably think of home, safety, love, food, and various other pleasant things. If one writes, “She was like a mother to me,” he gets an effect which he would not get in “She was like an aunt to me.” The advertiser makes use of the associations of mother by working it in when he talks about his product. The politician works it in when he talks about himself. So also with such words as home, liberty, fireside, contentment, patriot, tenderness, sacrifice, childlike, manly, bluff, limpid. All of these words are loaded with associations that would be rather hard to indicate in a straightforward definition. There is more than a literal difference between “They sat around the fireside” and “They sat around the stove.” They might have been equally warm and happy around the stove, but fireside suggests leisure, grace, quiet tradition, congenial company, and stove does not. Conversely, some words have bad associations. Mother suggests pleasant things, but mother-in-law does not. Many mothers-in--law are heroically lovable and some mothers drink gin all day and beat their children insensible, but these facts of life are beside the point. The point is that mother sounds good and mother-in-law does not. Or consider the word intellectual. This would seem to be a complimentary term, but in point of fact it is not, for it has picked up associations of impracticality and ineffectuality and general dopiness. So also such words as liberal, reactionary, Communist, socialist, capitalist, radical, schoolteacher, truck driver; operator, salesman, huckster, speculator. These convey meaning on the literal level, but beyond that — sometimes, in some places — they convey contempt on the part of the speaker. The question of whether to use loaded words or not depends on what is being written. The scientist, the scholar, try to avoid them; for the poet, the advertising writer, the public speaker, they are standard equipment. But every writer should take care that they do not substitute for thought. If you write, “Anyone who thinks that is nothing but a Socialist (or Communist or capitalist)” you have said nothing except that you don't like people who think that, and such remarks are effective only with the most naive readers. It is always a bad mistake to think your readers more naive than they really are.

Colorless Words

But probably most student writers come to grief not with words that are colorful or those that are colored but with those that have no color at all. A pet example is nice, a word we would find it hard to dispense with in casual conversation but which is no longer capable of adding much to a description. Colorless words are those of such general meaning that in a particular sentence they mean nothing. Slang adjectives like cool (“That's real cool”) tend to explode all over the language. They are applied to everything, lose their original force, and quickly die. Beware also of nouns of very general meaning, like circumstances, cases, instances, aspects, factors, relationships, attitudes, eventualities, etc. In most circumstances you will find that those cases of writing which contain too many instances of words like these will in this and other aspects have factors leading to unsatisfactory relationships with the reader resulting in unfavorable attitudes on his part and perhaps other eventualities, like a grade of “D.” Notice also what etc. means. It means “I'd like to make this list longer, but I can't think of any more examples.”

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7.7: Key Takeaways

- Revising and editing are the end stages of the writing process in which you improve your work before producing a final draft.
- When revising, you add, cut, move, or change information in order to improve content.
- During editing and proofreading, you take a second (and maybe third) look at the words and sentences you used to express your ideas and fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.
- 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.
- Cohesion 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 cohesive.
- Writing should be clear and concise, with no unnecessary words, and effective formal writing uses specific, appropriate words and avoids slang, contractions, clichés, and overly general words.
- Peer reviews, done properly, can give writers objective feedback about their writing. It is the writer's responsibility to evaluate the results of peer reviews and incorporate only useful feedback.
- Remember to budget time for careful editing and proofreading. Use all available resources, including editing checklists, peer editing, and your institution's writing lab, to improve your editing skills.
- Deal with higher order concerns (changes in content in organization) before dealing with lower order concerns, such as word choice and sentence structure.
- Along with getting feedback from others, reverse outlining is a good way to check your draft to see if any higher order concern changes need to be made.
- Be sure to proofread your work (for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and formatting) using one of the proofreading techniques before turning in your paper.

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8: CREATING PRESENTATIONS AND SHARING YOUR IDEAS

- Topic hierarchy

8.1: Organizing a Visual Presentation
8.2: Incorporating Effective Visuals into a Presentation
8.3: Giving a Presentation
8.4: Key Takeaways

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8.1: Organizing a Visual Presentation

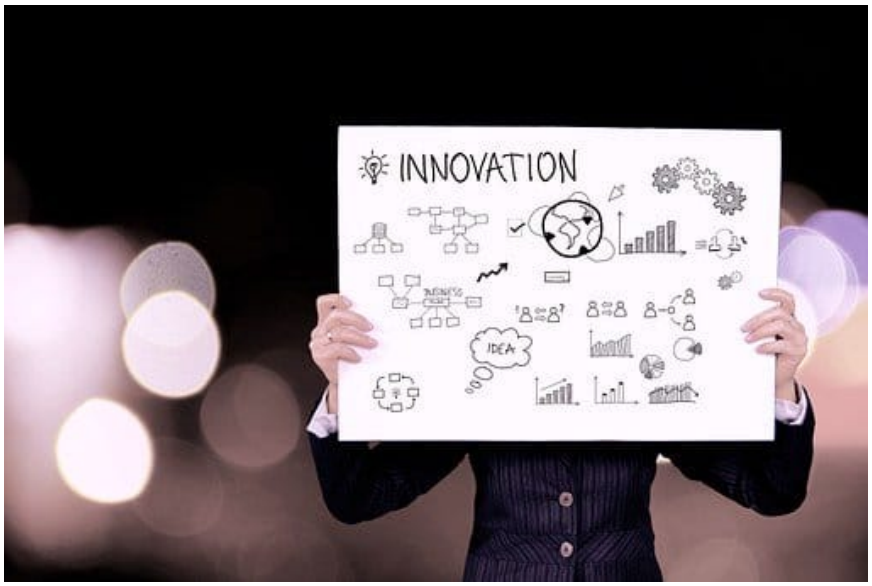


Figure: Image by Pixabay

Until now, you have interacted with your audience of readers indirectly, on the page. You have tried to anticipate their reactions and questions as all good writers do. Anticipating the audience's needs can be tough, especially when you are sitting alone in front of your computer.

When you give a presentation, you connect directly with your audience. For most people, making a presentation is both exciting and stressful. The excitement comes from engaging in a two-way interaction about your ideas. The stress comes from the pressure of presenting your ideas without having a delete button to undo mistakes. Outside the classroom, you may be asked to give a presentation, often at the last minute, and the show must go on. Presentations can be stressful, but planning and preparation, when the time and opportunity are available, can make all the difference.

This chapter covers how to plan and deliver an effective, engaging presentation. By planning carefully, applying some time-honored presentation strategies, and practicing, you can make sure that your presentation comes across as confident, knowledgeable, and interesting—and that your audience actually learns from it. The specific tasks involved in creating a presentation may vary slightly depending on your purpose and your assignment. However, these are the general steps.

1. Determine your purpose and identify the key ideas to present.
2. Organize your ideas in an outline.
3. Identify opportunities to incorporate visual or audio media, and create or locate these media aids.
4. Rehearse your presentation in advance.
5. Deliver your presentation to your audience.

Getting Started: Identifying and Organizing Key Ideas

To deliver a successful presentation, you need to develop content suitable for an effective presentation. Your ideas make up your presentation, but to deliver them effectively, you will need to identify key ideas and organize them carefully. Read the following considerations, which will help you first identify and then organize key ideas:

- **Be concise.** You will include the most important ideas and leave out others. Some concepts may need to be simplified.
- **Employ more than one medium of expression.** You should incorporate other media, such as charts, graphs, photographs, video or audio recordings, or websites.
- **Prepare for a face-to-face presentation.** If you must deliver a face-to-face presentation, it is important to project yourself as a serious and well-informed speaker. You will often speak extemporaneously, or in a rehearsed but not memorized manner,

which allows for flexibility given the context or audience. You will need to know your points and keep your audience engaged.

Determine Your Purpose

As with a writing assignment, determining the purpose of your presentation early on is crucial. You want to inform your readers about the topic, but think about what else you hope to achieve.

Are you presenting information intended to move your audience to adopt certain beliefs or take action on a particular issue? If so, you are speaking not only to inform but also to persuade your listeners. Do you want your audience to come away from your presentation knowing how to do something they that they did not know before? In that case, you are not only informing them but also explaining or teaching a process.

Writing at Work

Schoolteachers are trained to structure lessons around one or more lesson objectives. Usually the objective, the mission or purpose, states what students should know or be able to do after they complete the lesson. For example, an objective might state, “Students will understand the specific freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment” or “Students will be able to add two three-digit numbers correctly.”

As a manager, mentor, or supervisor, you may sometimes be required to teach or train other employees as part of your job. Determining the desired outcome of a training session will help you plan effectively. Identify your teaching objectives. What, specifically, do you want your audience to know (for instance, details of a new workplace policy) or be able to do (for instance, use a new software program)? Plan your teaching or training session to meet your objectives.

Identify Key Ideas

To plan your presentation, think in terms of three or four key points you want to get across. In a paper, you have the space to develop ideas at length and delve into complex details. In a presentation, however, you must convey your ideas more concisely.

One strategy you might try is to create an outline. What is your main idea? Would your main idea work well as key points for a brief presentation? How would you condense topics that might be too lengthy, or should you eliminate topics that may be too complicated to address in your presentation?

Exercise 1

1. Revisit your writing assignment, or think of a topic for your presentation. On your own sheet of notebook paper, write a list of at least three to five key ideas. Keep the following questions in mind when listing your key ideas:

- What is your purpose?
- Who is your audience?
- How will you engage your audience?

2. On the same paper, identify the steps you must complete before you begin creating your presentation.

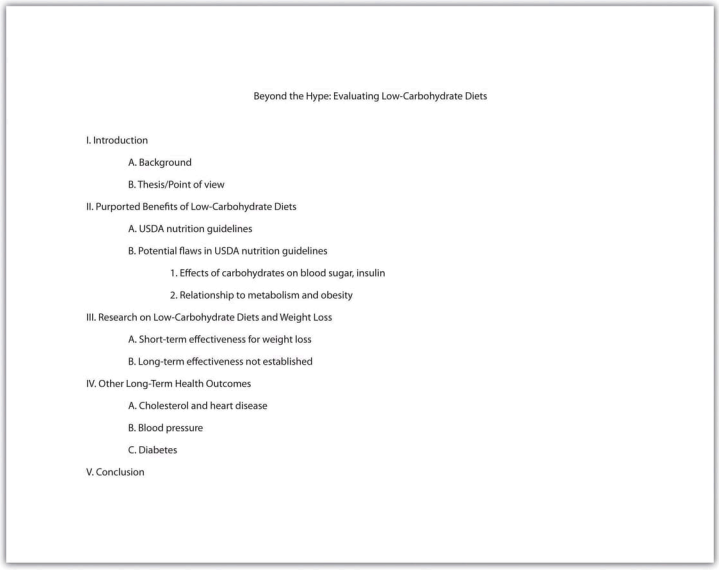
Use an Outline to Organize Ideas

After you determine which ideas are most appropriate for your presentation, you will create an outline of those ideas. Your presentation, like a written assignment, should include an introduction, body, and conclusion. These components serve much the same purpose as they do in a written assignment.

- The introduction engages the audience’s attention, introduces the topic, and sets the tone for what is to come.
- The body develops your point of view with supporting ideas, details, and examples presented in a logical order.
- The conclusion restates your point of view, sums up your main points, and leaves your audience with something to think

about.

Jorge, who wrote the research paper featured later in this book, developed the following outline. He relied heavily on this outline to plan his presentation, but he adjusted it to suit the new format.



Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carbohydrate Diets

I. Introduction
- A. Background
- B. Thesis/Point of view

II. Purported Benefits of Low-Carbohydrate Diets
- A. USDA nutrition guidelines
- B. Potential flaws in USDA nutrition guidelines
  - 1. Effects of carbohydrates on blood sugar, insulin
  - 2. Relationship to metabolism and obesity

III. Research on Low-Carbohydrate Diets and Weight Loss
- A. Short-term effectiveness for weight loss
- B. Long-term effectiveness not established

IV. Other Long-Term Health Outcomes
- A. Cholesterol and heart disease
- B. Blood pressure
- C. Diabetes

V. Conclusion

Planning Your Introduction

Figure: Image by Pixabay

In Section 5.4 you learned techniques for writing an interesting introduction, such as beginning with a surprising fact or statistic, a thought-provoking question or quotation, a brief anecdote that illustrates a larger concept or connects your topic to your audience's experiences. You can use these techniques effectively in presentations as well. You might also consider actively engaging your audience by having members respond to questions or complete a brief activity related to your topic. For example, you may have your audience respond to a survey or tell about an experience related to your topic.

Incorporating media can also be an effective way to get your audience's attention. Visual images such as a photograph or a cartoon can invoke an immediate emotional response. A graph or chart can highlight startling findings in research data or statistical information. Brief video or audio clips that clearly reinforce your message and do not distract or overwhelm your audience can provide a sense of immediacy when you plan to discuss an event or a current issue. A PowerPoint presentation

allows you to integrate many of these different media sources into one presentation. Google Slides is also allows you to do this, but you cannot incorporate audio voiceover.

Tip

With the accessibility provided by the Internet, you can find interesting and appropriate audio and video with little difficulty. However, the clip alone will not sustain the presentation. To keep the audience interested and engaged, you must frame the beginning and end of the clip with your own words.

Jorge completed the introduction part of his outline by listing the key points he would use to open his presentation. He also planned to show various web links early on to illustrate the popularity of the low-carbohydrate diet trend.

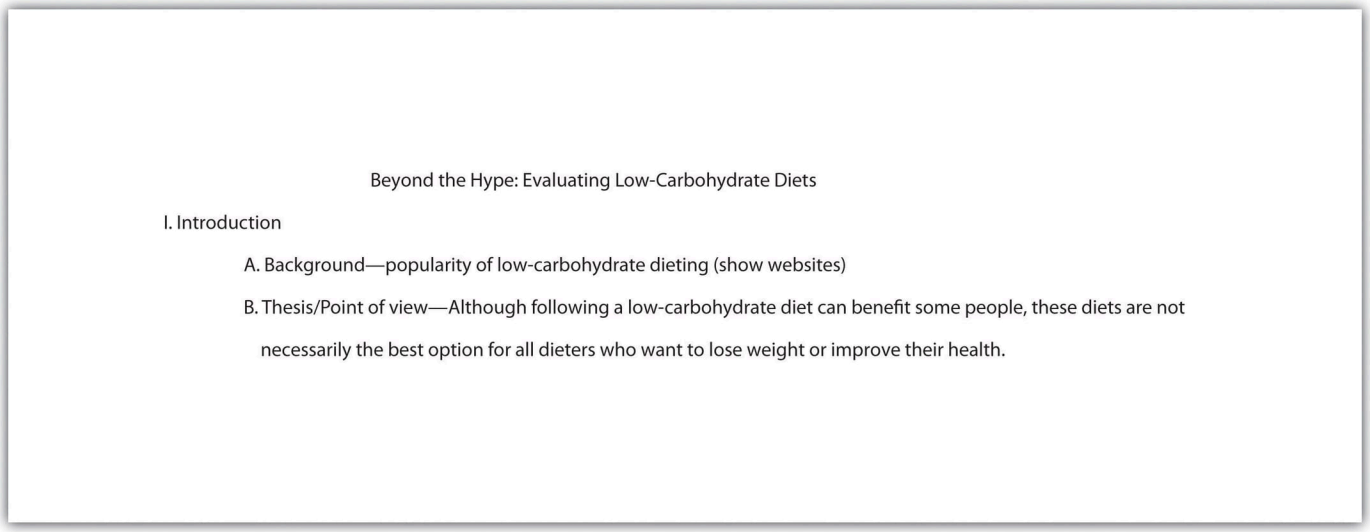


Figure: from @api.

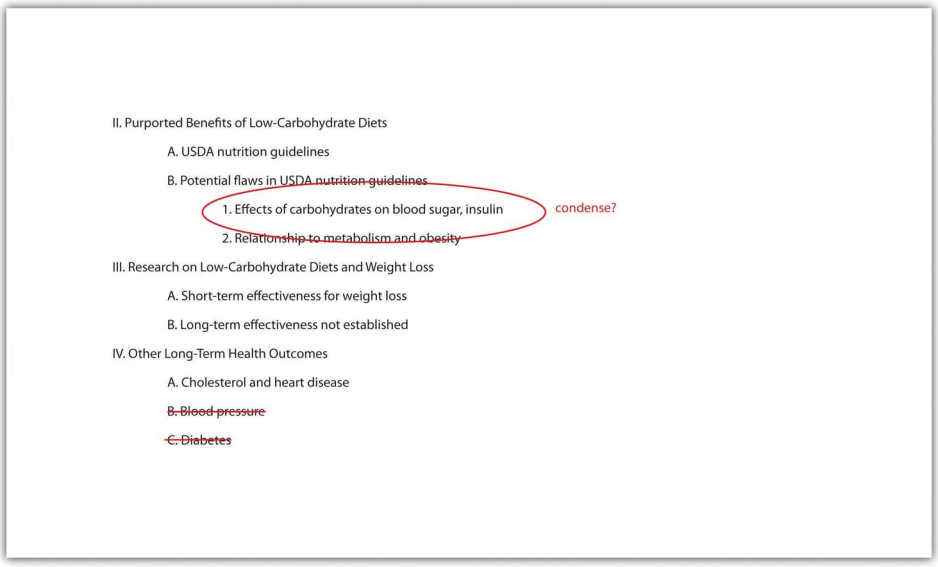
Planning the Body of Your Presentation

The next step is to work with the key ideas you identified earlier. Determine the order in which you want to present these ideas, and flesh them out with important details. Chapter 9, "Argumentation: Purpose and Persuasion in Writing" discusses several organizational structures you might work with, such as chronological order, comparison-and-contrast structure, or cause-and-effect structure.

How much detail you include will depend on the time allotted for your presentation. Your instructor will most likely give you a specific time limit or a specific slide limit, such as eight to ten slides. If the time limit is very brief (two to three minutes, for instance), you will need to focus on communicating your point of view, main supporting points, and only the most relevant details. Three minutes can feel like an eternity if you are speaking before a group, but the time will pass very quickly. It is important to use it well.

If you have more time to work with—ten minutes or half an hour—you will be able to discuss your topic in greater detail. More time also means you must devote more thought into how you will hold your audience's interest. If your presentation is longer than five minutes, introduce some variety so the audience is not bored. Incorporate multimedia, invite the audience to complete an activity, or set aside time for a question-and-answer session.

Jorge was required to limit his presentation to five to seven minutes. In his outline, he made a note about where he would need to condense some complicated material to stay within his time limit. He also decided to focus only on cholesterol and heart disease in his discussion of long-term health outcomes. The research on other issues was inconclusive, so Jorge decided to omit this material. Jorge's notes on his outline show the revisions he has made to his presentation.



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Tip

You are responsible for using your presentation time effectively to inform your audience. You show respect for your audience by following the expected time limit. However, that does not mean you must fill all of that time with talk if you are giving a face-to-face presentation. Involving your audience can take some of the pressure off you while also keeping them engaged. Have them respond to a few brief questions to get them thinking. Display a relevant photograph, document, or object and ask your classmates to comment. In some presentations, if time allows, you may choose to have your classmates complete an individual or group activity.

Planning Your Conclusion

The conclusion should briefly sum up your main idea and leave your audience with something to think about. As in a written paper, you are essentially revisiting your thesis. Depending on your topic, you may also ask the audience to reconsider their thinking about an issue, to take action, or to think about a related issue. If you presented an attention-getting fact or anecdote in your introduction, consider revisiting it in your conclusion. Just as you have learned about an essay's conclusion, do not add new content to the presentation's conclusion.

No matter how you choose to structure your conclusion, make sure it is well planned so that you are not tempted to wrap up your presentation too quickly. Inexperienced speakers, in a face-to-face presentation, sometimes rush through the end of a presentation to avoid exceeding the allotted time or to end the stressful experience of presenting in public. Unfortunately, a hurried conclusion makes the presentation as a whole less memorable and effective.

Tip

Time management is the key to delivering an effective presentation whether it is face-to-face or in PowerPoint. As you develop your outline, think about the amount of time you will devote to each section. For instance, in a five-minute face-to-face presentation, you might plan to spend one minute on the introduction, three minutes on the body, and one minute on the conclusion. Later, when you rehearse, you can time yourself to determine whether you need to adjust your content or delivery.

In a PowerPoint presentation, it is important that your presentation is visually stimulating (but not overly so), avoids information overload by limiting the text per slide, uses speaker notes effectively, and uses a font that is visible on the background (e.g., avoid white letters on a light background or black letters on a dark background).

Exercise 2

Work with the list you created in Exercise 1 to develop a more complete outline for your presentation. Make sure your outline includes the following:

- An introduction that uses strategies to capture your audience's attention,
- A body section that summarizes your main points and supporting details,
- A conclusion that will help you end on a memorable note, and
- Brief notes about how much time you plan to spend on each part of the presentation (you may adjust the timing later as needed)

Identifying Opportunities to Incorporate Visual and Audio Media

You may already have some ideas for how to incorporate visual and audio media in your presentation. If not, review your outline and begin thinking about where to include media. Presenting information in a variety of formats will help you keep your audience's interest.

Use Presentation Software

Delivering your presentation as a slideshow is one way to use media to your advantage. As you speak, use a computer and an attached projector to display a slideshow of text and graphics that complement the speech. Your audience will follow your ideas more easily, because you are communicating with them through more than one sense. The audience hears your words and also sees the corresponding visuals. A listener who momentarily loses track of what you are saying can rely on the slide to cue his or her memory.

To set up your presentation, you will need to work with the content of your outline to develop individual slides. Each slide should focus on just a few bullet points (or a similar amount of content presented in a graphic). Remember that your audience must be able to read the slides easily, whether the members sit in the front or the back of the room. Avoid overcrowding the slides with too much text. Everything you say should not appear on the slide.

Using presentation software, such as PowerPoint, allows you to incorporate graphics, sounds, and even web links directly into your slides. You can also work with available styles, color schemes, and fonts to give your presentation a polished, consistent appearance. Different slide templates make it easy to organize information to suit your purpose. Be sure your font is visible to you audience. Avoid using small font or colored font that is not visible against your background.

Use PowerPoint as a Visual Aid

PowerPoint and similar visual presentation programs can be effective tools to help audiences remember your message, but they can also be an annoying distraction to your speech. How you prepare your slides and use the tool will determine your effectiveness.

PowerPoint is a slideware program that you have no doubt seen used in class, seen in a presentation at work, or perhaps used yourself to support a presentation. PowerPoint and similar slideware programs provide templates for creating electronic slides to present visual information to the audience, reinforcing the verbal message. You will be able to import or cut and paste words from text files, images, or video clips to create slides to represent your ideas. You can even incorporate web links. When using any software program, it is always a good idea to experiment with it long before you intend to use it; explore its many options and functions, and see how it can be an effective tool for you.

At first, you might be overwhelmed by the possibilities, and you might be tempted to use all the bells, whistles, and sound effects, not to mention the tumbling, flying, and animated graphics. If used wisely, a dissolve or key transition can be like a well-executed scene from a major motion picture and lead your audience to the next point. But if used indiscriminately, it can annoy the audience to the point where they cringe in anticipation of the sound effect at the start of each slide. This danger is inherent in the tool, but you are in charge of it and can make wise choices that enhance the understanding and retention of your information.

The first point to consider is which visual aid is the most important. The answer is you, the speaker. You will facilitate the discussion, give life to the information, and help the audience correlate the content to your goal or purpose. You do not want to

be in a position where the PowerPoint presentation is the focus and you are on the side of the stage simply helping the audience follow along. Slides should support you in your presentation, rather than the other way around. Just as there is a number one rule for handouts (do not pass them out at the start of your presentation), there is also one for PowerPoint presentations: do not use PowerPoint slides as a read-aloud script for your speech. The PowerPoint slides should amplify and illustrate your main points, not reproduce everything you are going to say.

Your pictures are the second area of emphasis you will want to consider. The tool will allow you to show graphs, charts and illustrate relationships that words may only approach in terms of communication, but your verbal support of the visual images will make all the difference. Dense pictures or complicated graphics will confuse more than they clarify. Choose clear images that have an immediate connection to both your content and the audience, tailored to their specific needs. After the images, consider using only key words that can be easily read to accompany your pictures. The fewer words the better. Try to keep each slide to a total word count of less than ten words. Do not use full sentences. Using key words provides support for your verbal discussion, guiding you as well as your audience. The key words can serve as signposts or signal words related to key ideas.

A natural question at this point is, How do I communicate complex information simply? The answer comes with several options. The visual representation on the screen is for support and illustration. Should you need to communicate more technical, complex, or in-depth information in a visual way, consider preparing a handout to distribute at the conclusion of your speech. You may also consider using a printout of your slide show with a section for taking notes, but if you distribute it at the beginning of your speech, you run the risk of turning your presentation into a guided reading exercise and possibly distracting or losing members of the audience. Everyone reads at a different pace and takes notes in their own way. You do not want to be in the position of going back and forth between slides to help people follow along.

Another point to consider is how you want to use the tool to support your speech and how your audience will interpret its presentation. Most audiences wouldn't want to read a page of text—as you might see in this book—on the big screen. They will be far more likely to glance at the screen and assess the information you present in relation to your discussion. Therefore, it is key to consider one main idea, relationship, or point per slide. The use of the tool should be guided with the idea that its presentation is for the audience's benefit, not yours. People often understand pictures and images more quickly and easily than text, and you can use this to your advantage, using the knowledge that a picture is worth a thousand words.

Incorporate Visual Media

Even if you do not use a slideshow to complement your presentation, you can include visual media to support and enhance your content. Visual media are divided into two major categories: images and informational graphics.

Image-based media, such as photographs or videos, often have little or no accompanying text. Often these media are more powerful than words in getting a message across. Within the past decade, the images associated with major news stories, such as the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, the Abu Ghraib prison abuses from 2004 to 2006, and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, have powerfully affected viewers' emotions and drawn their attention to these news stories.

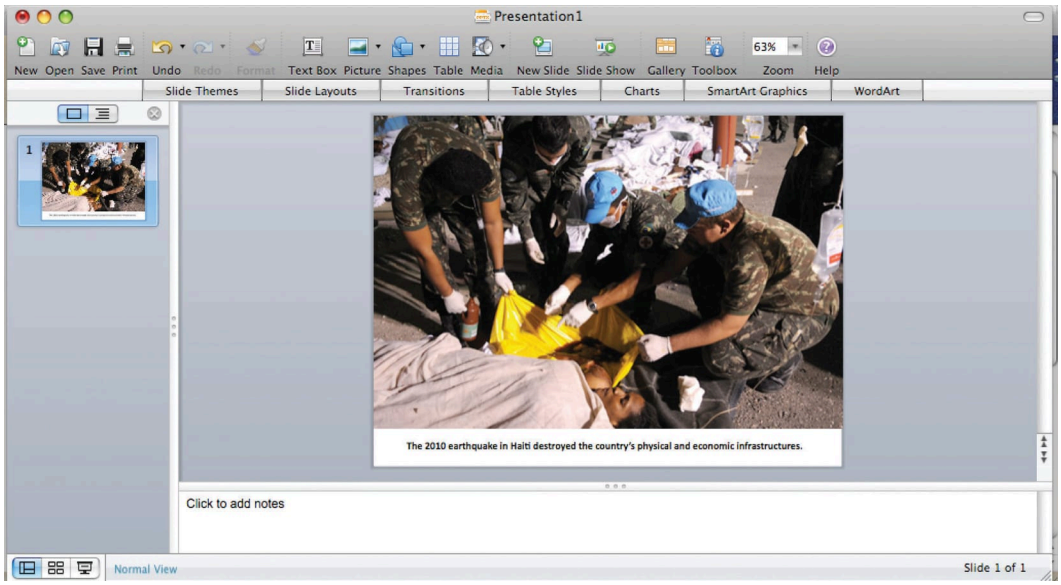


Figure: from @api.

Even if your presentation addresses a less dramatic subject, you can still use images to draw in your audience. Consider how photographs, an illustration, or a video might help your audience connect with a particular person or place or bring a historical event to life. Use visual images to support descriptions of natural or man-made phenomena. What ideas lend themselves to being explained primarily through images?

In addition, consider how you might incorporate informational graphics in your presentation. Informational graphics include diagrams, tables, pie charts, bar and line graphs, and flow charts. Informational graphics usually include some text and often work well to present numerical information. Consider using them if you are presenting statistics, comparing facts or data about several different groups, describing changes over time, or presenting a process.

Incorporate Audio Media

Although audio media are not as versatile as visual media, you may wish to use them if they work well with your particular topic. If your presentation discusses trends in pop music or analyzes political speeches, playing an audio clip is an obvious and effective choice. Clips from historical speeches, radio talk shows, and interviews can also be used, but extended clips may be ineffective with modern audiences. Always assess your audience's demographics and expectations before selecting and including audio media.

Exercise 3

Review the outline you created in Exercise 2. Complete the following steps:

1. Identify at least two to three places in your presentation where you might incorporate visual or audio media. Brainstorm ideas for what media would be effective, and create a list of ideas. (For now, focus on coming up with a few general ideas.)
2. Determine whether you will use presentation software to deliver your presentation as a slideshow. If you plan to do so, begin using your outline to draft your slides.

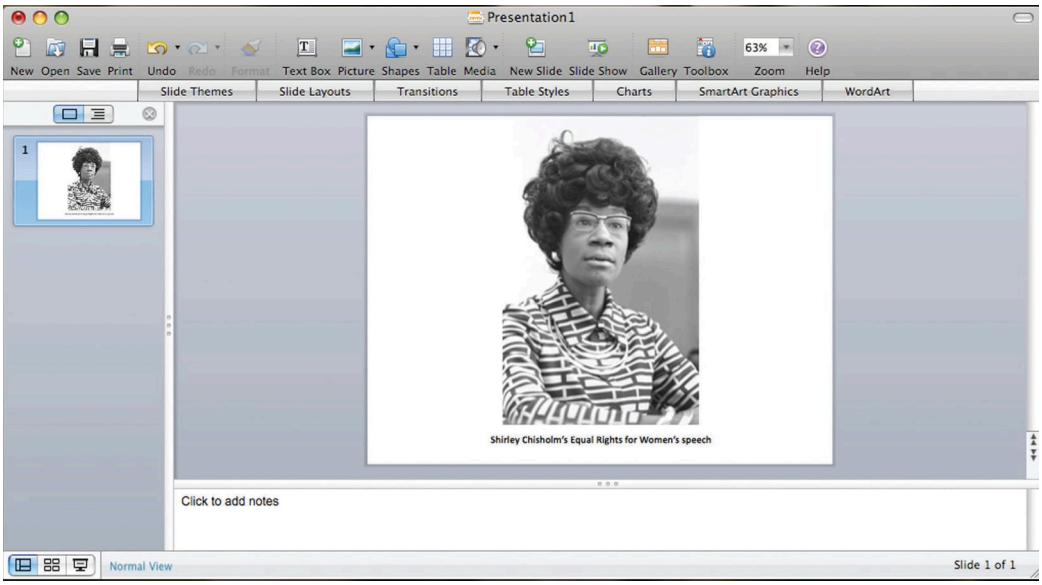


Figure: from agenciabrasil.gov.

Planning Ahead: Annotating Your Presentation

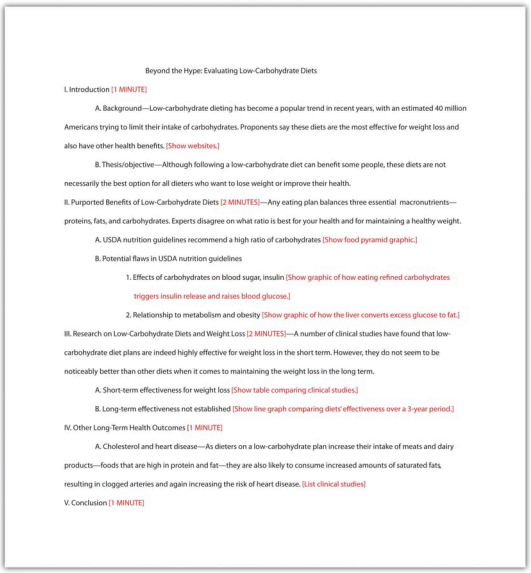
When you make a presentation, you are giving a performance of sorts. It may not be as dramatic as a play or a movie, but it requires smooth coordination of several elements—your words, your gestures, and any media you include. One way to ensure that the performance goes smoothly is to annotate your presentation ahead of time.

To annotate means to add comments or notes to a document. You can use this technique to plan how the different parts of your presentation will flow together. For instance, if you are working with slides, add notes to your outline indicating when you will show each slide. If you have other visual or audio media to include, make a note of that, too. Be as detailed as necessary. Jotting "Start video at 3:14" can spare you the awkwardness of searching for the right clip during your presentation.

Writing at Work

In the workplace, employees are often asked to deliver presentations or conduct a meeting using standard office presentation software. If you are using presentation software, you can annotate your presentation easily as you create your slides. Use the notes feature at the bottom of the page to add notes for each slide. As you deliver your presentation, your notes will be visible to you on the computer screen but not to your audience on the projector screen.

In a face-to-face presentation, make sure your final annotated outline is easy to read. It will serve to cue you during your presentation, so it does not need to look polished, as long as it is clear to you. Double space the text. Use a larger-than-normal font size (14 or 16 points) if that will make it easier for you to read. Boldface or italics will set off text that should be emphasized or delivered with greater emotion. Write out main points, as well as your opening and closing remarks, in complete sentences, along with any material you want to quote verbatim. Use shorter phrases for supporting details. Using your speaker notes effectively will help you deliver an effective presentation. Highlighting, all capital letters, or different-colored font will help you easily distinguish notes from the text of your speech. Read Jorge's annotated outline.



Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carbohydrate Diets

I. Introduction [1 MINUTE]

A. Background—Low-carbohydrate dieting has become a popular trend in recent years, with an estimated 40 million Americans trying to limit their intake of carbohydrates. Proponents say these diets are the most effective for weight loss and also have other health benefits. [Show websites.]

B. Thesis/objective—Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for all dieters who want to lose weight or improve their health.

II. Purported Benefits of Low-Carbohydrate Diets [2 MINUTES]—Any eating plan balances three essential macronutrients—proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. Experts disagree on what ratio is best for your health and for maintaining a healthy weight.

A. USDA nutrition guidelines recommend a high ratio of carbohydrates [Show food pyramid graphic.]

B. Potential flaws in USDA nutrition guidelines

1. Effects of carbohydrates on blood sugar, insulin [Show graphic of how eating refined carbohydrates triggers insulin release and raises blood glucose.]

2. Relationship to metabolism and obesity [Show graphic of how the liver converts excess glucose to fat.]

III. Research on Low-Carbohydrate Diets and Weight Loss [2 MINUTES]—A number of clinical studies have found that low-carbohydrate diet plans are indeed highly effective for weight loss in the short term. However, they do not seem to be noticeably better than other diets when it comes to maintaining the weight loss in the long term.

A. Short-term effectiveness for weight loss [Show table comparing clinical studies.]

B. Long-term effectiveness not established [Show line graph comparing diets' effectiveness over a 3-year period.]

IV. Other Long-Term Health Outcomes [1 MINUTE]

A. Cholesterol and heart disease—As dieters on a low-carbohydrate plan increase their intake of meats and dairy products—foods that are high in protein and fat—they are also likely to consume increased amounts of saturated fats, resulting in clogged arteries and again increasing the risk of heart disease. [List clinical studies]

V. Conclusion [1 MINUTE]

Tip

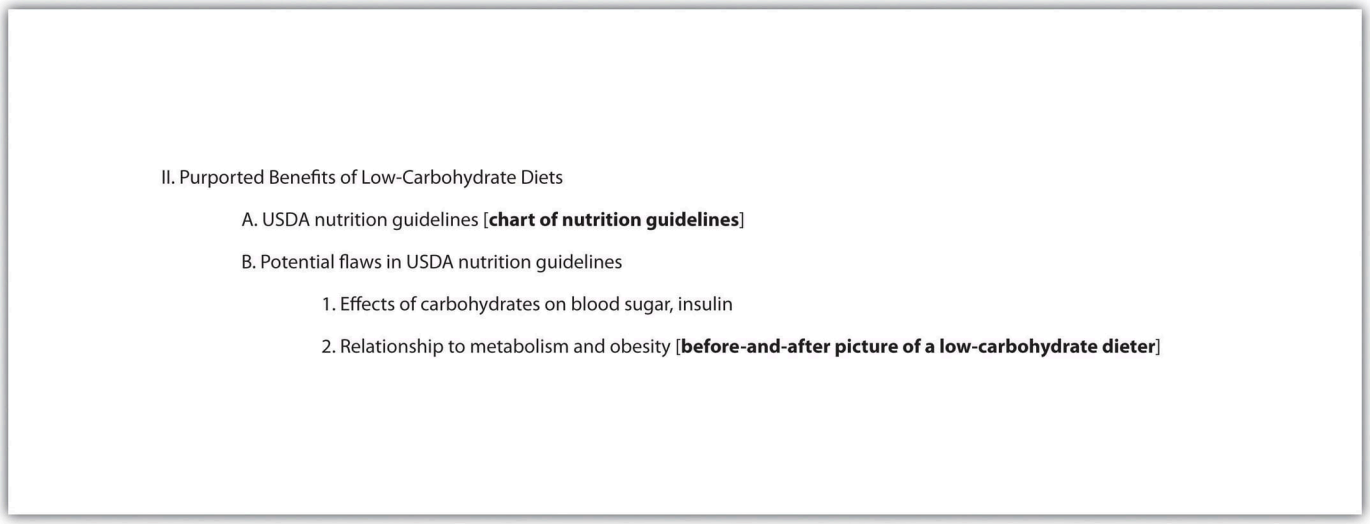
Some students prefer to write out the full text of their face-to-face presentation. This can be a useful strategy when you are practicing your delivery. However, keep in mind that reading your text aloud, word for word, will not help you capture and hold your audience's attention. Write out and read your speech if that helps you rehearse. After a few practice sessions, when you are more comfortable with your material, switch to working from an outline. That will help you sound more natural when you speak to an audience.

In a PowerPoint presentation, remember to have your slides in logical, sequential order. Annotating your presentation before submitting it to your audience or your instructor will help you check for order and logical transitions. Too much text or data may confuse your audience; strive for clarity and avoid unnecessary details. Let the pictures or graphics tell the story but do not overload your slideshow with visuals. Be sure your font is visible. Look for consistency in the time limit of your presentation to gauge your level of preparedness.

Exercise 4

Begin to annotate your outline. (You will probably add more notes as you proceed, but including some annotations now will help you begin pulling your ideas together.) Mark your outline with the following information:

1. Write notes in brackets to any sections where you definitely plan to incorporate visual or audio media.
2. If you are presenting a slideshow, add notes in brackets indicating which slides go with each section of your outline.
3. Identify and set off any text that should be emphasized.



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8.2: Incorporating Effective Visuals into a Presentation

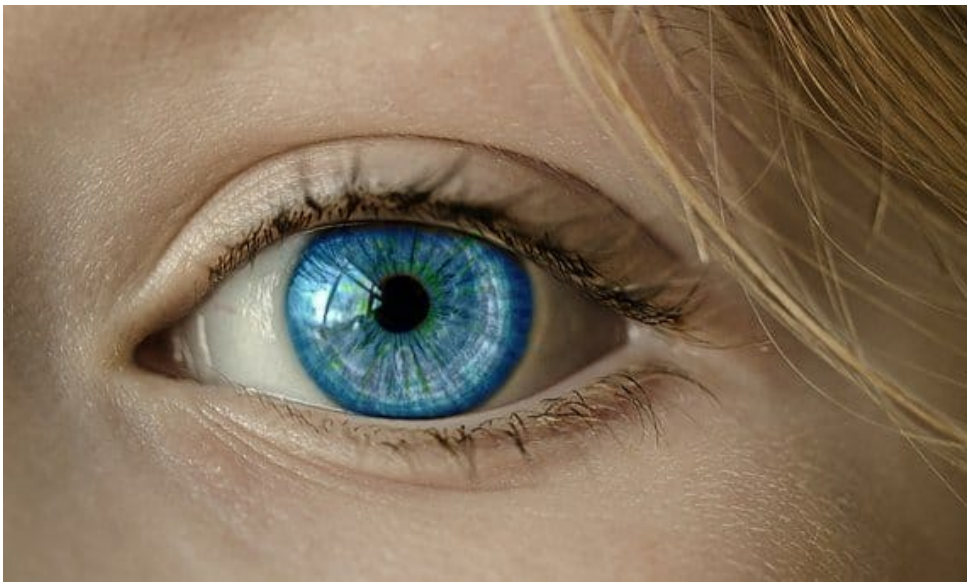

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Good communication is a multi-sensory experience. Children first learning how to read often gravitate toward books with engaging pictures. As adults, we graduate to denser books without pictures, yet we still visualize ideas to help us understand the text. Advertisers favor visual media—television, magazines, and billboards—because they are the best way to hook an audience. Websites rely on color, graphics, icons, and a clear system of visual organization to engage Internet surfers.

Bringing visuals into a presentation adds color, literally and figuratively. There is an art to doing it well. This section covers how to use different kinds of visual aids effectively. If you use an image that someone else made, be sure to cite the source of the image, just as you would a quote.

Using Visual Aids: The Basics

Good writers make conscious choices. They understand their purpose and audience. Every decision they make on the page, from organizing an essay to choosing a word with just the right connotations, is made with their purpose and audience in mind.

The same principle applies to visual communication. As a presenter, you choose the following:

- When to show images or video for maximum impact;
- Which images will best produce the effect you want;
- When to present information using a table, chart, or other graphic;
- How much text to include in slides or informational graphics; and
- How to organize graphics so they present information clearly.

Your goal is to use visual media to support and enhance your presentation. At the same time, you must make sure these media do not distract your audience or interfere with getting your point across. Your ideas, not your visuals, should be the focus.

As you develop the visual side of your presentation, you will follow a process much like the process you follow when you write. You will brainstorm ideas, form an organizational plan, develop drafts, and then refine and edit your work. The following sections provide guidelines to help you make good decisions throughout the process.

What Makes Visual Aids Effective?

To help you get a sense of what makes visual media work, think about what does not work. Try to recall occasions when you have

witnessed the following visual media failures:

- Websites crammed with so many images, flashing phrases,pop-up videos, and clashing colors that they are almost unreadable
- Assembly instructions with illustrations or diagrams that are impossible to follow
- Photographs that are obviously (and badly) altered with photo-editing software
- Distracting typos or other errors in signs, advertisements, or headlines
- Tables, charts, or graphs with tiny, dense text or missing labels

In each case, the problem is that the media creator did not think carefully enough about the purpose and audience. The purpose of images, color, or flashing text on a website is to attract attention. Overusing these elements defeats the purpose because the viewer may become overwhelmed or distracted. Tables, charts, and graphs are intended to simplify complex information, but without clear labels and legible text, they will confuse the audience.

In contrast, effective visual elements are chosen or created with the purpose and audience in mind. Although a photo shoot for a magazine article might result in dozens of images, editors choose those few that work best with the article. Web designers and video game creators have an audience test their products before they are released to ensure that people will understand how to use them. Understanding the function of different visual aids will help you use them with purpose.

Types of Visual Aids

Visual aids fall into two main categories—images and informational graphics. Images include photographs, illustrations and clip art, and video footage. Informational graphics include tables, charts, bar graphs, and line graphs.

These visual aids serve two purposes: to add emotional impact to your presentation and to organize information more clearly. With that in mind, read to find out how specific types of visual aids achieve those purposes.

Photographs

A striking photograph can capture your audience's attention far more successfully than words can. Consider including photographs at the beginning or end of your presentation to emphasize your main ideas or to accompany a particularly important point in the body of your presentation. Remember that, as with other types of graphics, less is often more. Two or three well-chosen photographs are more effective than a dozen mediocre ones.

When you choose photographs, ask yourself these questions:

- What purpose does this image serve? Will it surprise the audience? Will it provoke a strong emotional response? Does it support an important point?
- Will this photograph be more effective if shown with only a caption, or does it need additional text?
- Will the audience understand what is happening in the photograph? Is the meaning immediately evident, or does the photo need some context?
- Would editing the image make it more effective? Consider using image-editing software to crop the photo, change the brightness, or make other cosmetic changes. (Do not go overboard, though. A slightly imperfect but authentic image is preferable to one that has been obviously altered.)

To illustrate the sense of helplessness people felt in the midst of tragedy, a student could use a photograph that shows fear, weariness, or defeat on the face of the photograph's subject.

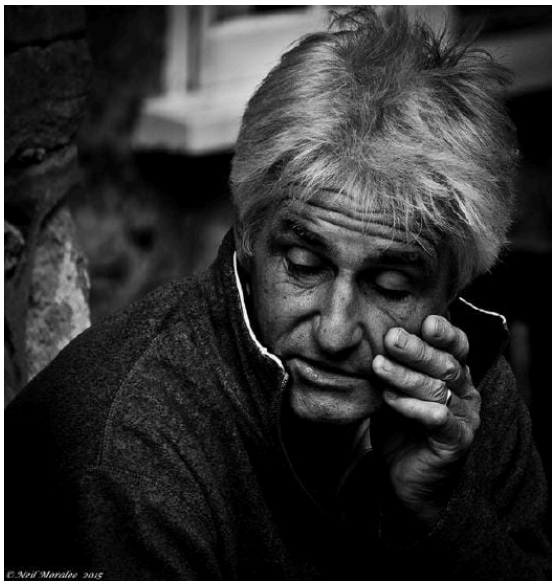

Figure: by Neil Moralee.

Illustrations

Illustrations, such as editorial or political cartoons, serve much the same purpose as photographs. Because an illustration does not capture a moment in time the way a photo does, it may have less impact. However, depending on your topic and the effect you want to achieve, illustrations can still be very useful. Use the same criteria for choosing photographs to help you choose illustrations.

Figure: CC BY 2.0

Tip

The style of an illustration or photograph affects viewers just as the content does. Keep this in mind if you are working with the stock images available in office software programs. Many of these images have a comical tone. This may be fine for some topics—for instance, a presentation on television shows for children. However, if you need to project a more serious tone, make sure you choose images to suit that purpose. Many free (or reasonably priced) image banks are available online.

Video Footage

Even more than photographs, video footage can create a sense of immediacy, especially if your video includes sound. Showing a brief video clip can help your audience feel as if they are present at an important event, connect with a person being interviewed, or better understand a process. Again, ask yourself the following questions to ensure you are using the footage well:

- What purpose does this video serve? (Never rely on video clips just to fill time.)
- How much footage should be shown to achieve your purpose?
- What will need to be explained, before or after showing the video, to ensure that your audience understands its significance?
- Will it be necessary to edit the video to stay within time requirements or to focus on the most important parts?

Tables

Informational graphics, such as tables, charts, and graphs, do not provoke the same response that images do. Nevertheless, these graphics can have a powerful impact. Their primary purpose is to organize and simplify information.

Tables are effective when you must classify information and organize it in categories. Tables are an especially good choice when you are presenting qualitative data that are not strictly numerical. Table 8.2.1 “Example of Qualitative Data Table” was created for a presentation discussing the subprime mortgage crisis. It presents information about people who have held powerful positions both in the government and at one of the investment banking firms involved in the subprime mortgage market.

Table 8.2.1 - Example of Qualitative Data Table

Name	Role(s) at Goldman Sachs	Years Active	Government Role(s)	Years Active
Henry Paulson	Chief operating officer	1994–1998	US secretary of the treasury	2006–2009
	Chief executive officer	1998–2006		
Robert Rubin	Vice chairman and co-chief operating officer	1987–1990	Assistant to the president for economic policy and director, National Economic Council	1993–95
	Co-chairman and co-senior partner	1990–1992	US secretary of the treasury	1995–1999
Stephen Friedman	Co-chief operating officer	1987–1990	Assistant to the president for economic policy and director, National Economic Council	2002–2005
	Co-chairman	1990–1992		
	Chairman	1992–1994		

Sources:
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/business/19gold.html;
http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/henry_m_jr_paulson/index.html?inline=nyt-per;
http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/r/robert_e_rubin/index.html?inline=nyt-per,
http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/13/us/man-in-the-news-economic-adviser-from-other-side-of-the-deficit-stephen-friedman.html;
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/342086.stm.

Tip

If you are working with numerical information, consider whether a pie chart, bar graph, or line graph might be an effective way to present the content. A table can help you organize numerical information, but it is not the most effective way to emphasize contrasting data or to show changes over time.

Pie Charts

Pie charts are useful for showing numerical information in percentages. For example, you can use a pie chart to represent

presidential election results by showing what percentage of voters voted for the Democratic presidential candidate, the Republican candidate, and candidates from other political parties. When using pie charts, all of the percentage must, together, equal 100%.

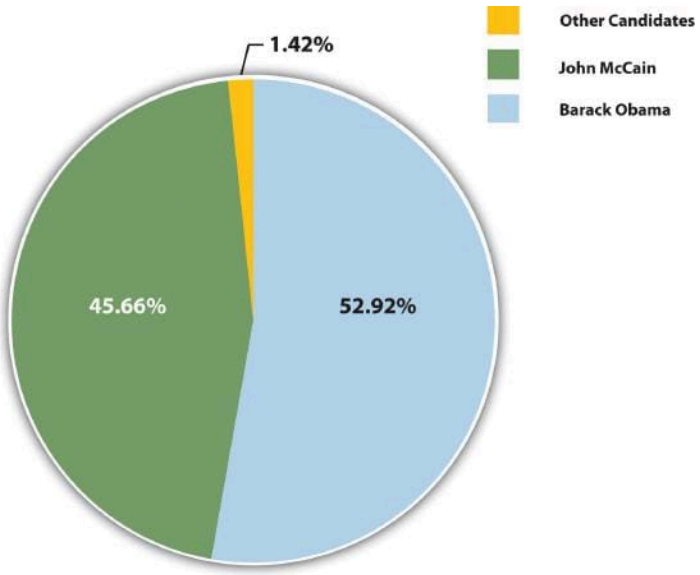

Figure: from www.fec.gov.

Bar Graphs

Bar graphs work well when you want to show similarities and differences in numerical data. Horizontal or vertical bars help viewers compare data from different groups, different time periods, and so forth. For instance, the bar graph, below, allows the viewer to compare data on the five countries that have won the most Olympic medals since the modern games began in 1924: Norway, the United States, the former Soviet Union, Germany, and Austria. Bar graphs can effectively show trends or patterns in data as well.

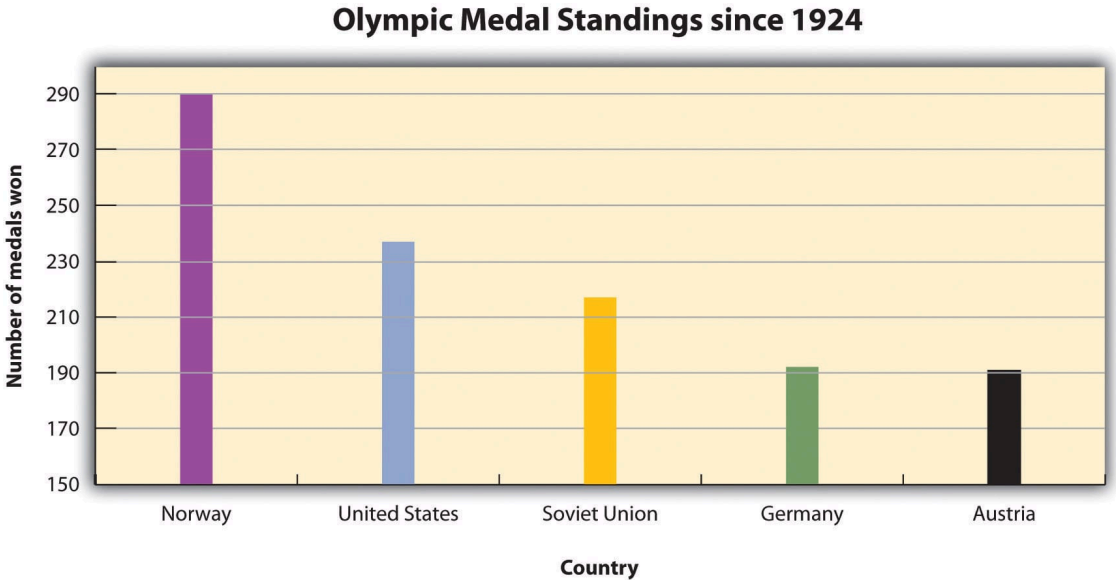

Figure: from www.nbcolympics.com.

Line Graphs

Like bar graphs, line graphs show trends in data. Line graphs are usually used to show trends in data over time. For example, the line graph, below, shows changes in the Dow Jones Industrial Average—an economic index based on trading information about

thirty large, US-based public companies. This graph shows where the Dow closed at the end of each business day over a period of five days.

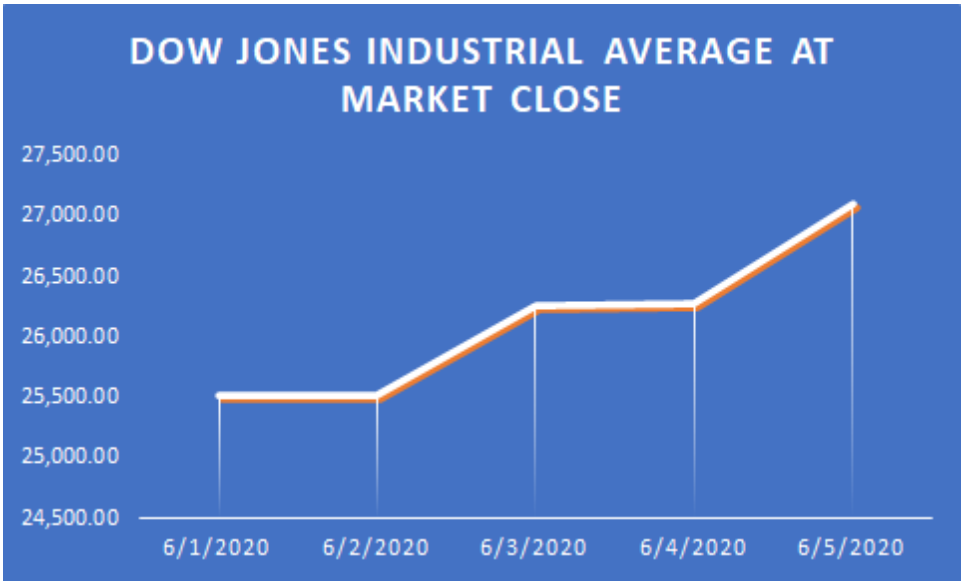

Figure: Data Source: Yahoo Finance.

Exercise 1

In this exercise, you will begin to refine your ideas for incorporating media into your presentation. Complete the following steps on your own sheet of paper.

1. Revisit the list you brainstormed for Exercise 3 in Section 8.1 and the annotated outline you developed for Exercise 4.
2. Analyze the two different types of visual aids: images and informational graphics. Identify at least two places in your presentation where you might incorporate visual aids.
3. Evaluate the purpose of the visual aid. Does it create emotional impact, or does it organize information? Is the visual effective?
4. Determine whether you will be able to create the visual aid yourself or will need to find it.

Creating Original Visual Aids

You may include original visual aids in your presentation to add interest, present complex information or data more clearly, or appeal to your audience's emotions. You may wish to create some visual aids by hand—for instance, by mounting photographs on poster board for display. More likely, however, you will use computer-generated graphics.

Computer-generated visual aids are easy to create once you learn how to use certain office software. They also offer greater versatility. You can print hard copies and display them large or include them in a handout for your audience. Or, if you are working with presentation software, you can simply insert the graphics in your slides.

Regardless of how you proceed, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- **Create visual aids with purpose.** Think carefully about how they will enhance your message, and choose a form that is appropriate for your content.
- **Strive for quality.** You do not need the skills of a professional photographer or designer, but do take time to make sure your visual aids are neat, attractive, and legible. Proofread for errors, too.

Using Software to Create Visual Aids

You can use standard office software to create simple graphics easily. The following guidelines describe how to work with word-

processing software and presentation software.

Working with Photographs

Most personal computers come equipped with some basic image-editing software, and many people choose to purchase more advanced programs as well. You can upload photographs from a digital camera (or in some cases, a cell phone) or scan and upload printed photographs. The images can then be edited and incorporated into your presentation. Be sure to save all of your images in one folder for easy access.

Creating Tables

To create a table within a word-processing document consult your software program's help feature or an online tutorial. Once you have created the table, you can edit and make any additional changes. Be sure that the table has no more than six to seven rows or columns because you do not want to compromise the size of the text or the readability. Aligning with precision will help your table look less crowded. Also, the row and column titles should spell out their contents.

Creating Graphs

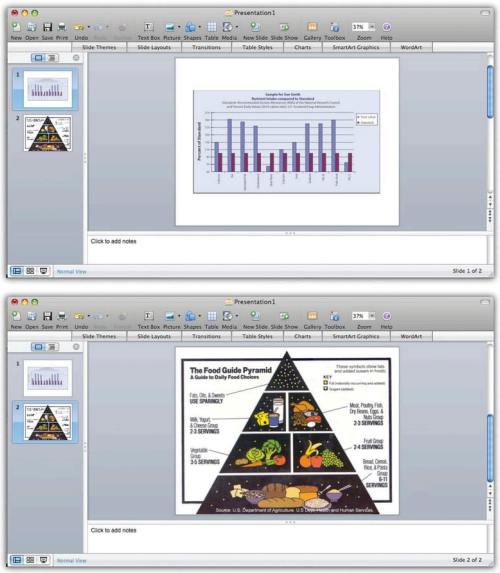

Figure: Pie charts and bar and line graphs can also be created using standard office software (as the stock market line chart was, above). Although you can create these graphics within a document, you will need to work with both your word-processing application and your spreadsheet application to do so. The graph should visually explain the data using colors, titles, and labels. The use of color will help the audience distinguish information; however, avoid colors that are hard on the eyes, such as lime green or hot pink. The title should clearly state what the graph explains. Lastly, avoid using acronyms in the titles and other labels.

Creating Graphics in an Electronic Presentation

If you plan to work only with hard copy graphics during your presentation, you may choose to create them as word-processing documents. However, if you are using presentation software, you will need to choose one of the following options:

- Create your graphics using the presentation software program.
- Create your graphics within another program and import them.

Standard office presentation software allows you to create informational graphics in much the same way you would create them within a word-processing application. Keep the formatting palette, a menu option that allows you to customize the graphic, open while you use the software. The formatting menu provides options for inserting other types of graphics, such as pictures and video. You may insert pictures from an image bank available within the program, or insert images or video from your own desktop files. Shape your use of multimedia in accordance with the message your presentation is trying to convey, the purpose, and your audience.

Creating Visual Aids by Hand

Most of the time, using computer-generated graphics is more efficient than creating them by hand. Using office software programs helps give your graphics a polished appearance while also teaching you skills that are useful in a variety of jobs. However, it may make sense to use hand-created visual aids in some cases—for instance, when showing a 3-D model would be effective. If you follow this route, be sure to devote extra time to making sure your visual aids are neat, legible, and professional.

Flip charts are inexpensive and quick visual aids used during face-to-face presentations. The flip chart can be prepared before, as well as during, the presentation. Each sheet of paper should contain one theme, idea, or sketch and must be penned in large letters to be seen by audience members farthest away from the speaker.

Writing Captions

Any media you incorporate should include a caption or other explanatory text. A caption is a brief, one- to two-sentence description or explanation of a visual image. Make sure your captions are clear, accurate, and to the point. Use full sentences when you write them.

Captions should always be used with photographs, and in some cases, they can be useful for clarifying informational graphics, which represent qualitative data visually. However, informational graphics may not require a caption if the title and labels are sufficiently clear. For other visual media, such as video footage, providing explanatory text before or after the footage will suffice. The important thing is to make sure you always include some explanation of the media.

Exercise 2

In this exercise, you will begin to develop visual aids for your presentation. Complete the steps in this exercise—and enjoy the chance to be creative. Working with visuals can be a pleasant way to take a break from the demands of writing.

1. Revisit the ideas you developed in Exercise 1. Choose at least two ideas that you can create. (**Note:** If you are using software to develop a slideshow presentation, count this as one of your self-created visual aids. Include at least one other self-created visual aid, such as an original photograph, within your slideshow.)
2. Get creative! Take your photographs, construct a 3-D model, create informational graphics, or work on your presentation slides. Develop good working drafts.
3. After you have completed drafts of your visual aids, set them aside for a while. Then revisit them with a critical eye. First, check any text included with the graphic. Make sure your facts are correct, your words are clear and concise, and your language is free of errors.
4. Next, evaluate how well your aids work visually. Are they large enough to be seen and read from a distance? Are captions and labels easy to find? Are photographs of reasonably high quality? Ask someone else for feedback, too.
5. Begin making any needed changes. As you proceed through the rest of this section, continue to revisit your work to improve it as needed.

Collaboration

Please share the first version of your visual aids with a classmate. Examine what they have produced. On a separate piece of paper, note both the elements that catch your attention and those that would benefit from clarification. Return and compare notes.

Testing and Evaluating Visual Aids

Regardless of how you create your visual aids, be sure to test-drive them before you deliver your presentation. Edit and proofread them, and if possible, show them to someone who can give you objective feedback. Use the following checklist.

Checklist 8.2

Visual Aid Evaluation Checklist

- Visual aids are clearly integrated with the content of the presentation
- Photographs and illustrations suit the overall tone of the presentation
- Images and text are large and clear enough for the viewer to see or read
- Images are shown with explanatory text or a caption
- Informational graphics include clear, easy-to-read labels and headings
- Text within informational graphics is easy to read (Watch out for wordiness and crowded text or a font that is too small and hard to read.)
- Formatting choices (color, different fonts, etc.) organize information effectively
- Any text within graphics is free of errors
- Hyperlinks within slides function properly
- Display text for hyperlinks is concise and informative (Never paste a link into a slide without modifying the display text.)

Writing at Work

Office software includes many options for personalizing a presentation. For instance, you can choose or create a theme and color scheme, modify how one slide transitions to the next, or even include sound effects. With so many options, students and employees sometimes get carried away. The result can seem amateurish and detract from, rather than enhance, your presentation.

Remember, you are delivering a presentation, not producing a movie. Use the customization options to help give your presentations a consistent, polished, appearance. However, do not let these special effects detract from the substance of your slides.

Using Existing Visual Media

Depending on your topic, you may be able to find images and other graphics you can use instead of creating your own. For instance, you might use photographs from a reputable news source or informational graphics created by a government agency. If you plan to use visual aids created by others, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- **Set a purpose before you begin your search.** You will search more efficiently if you start with a general idea of what you are looking for—a line graph of unemployment rates for the past twelve months, for example, or a video clip of the most recent State of the Union address.
- **Filter out visual aids that are not relevant.** You may come across eye-catching graphics and be tempted to use them even if they are only loosely related to your topic, simply because they are attention getting. Resist the temptation. If the graphic is not clearly connected to your point, it does not belong in your presentation.
- **Read carefully.** In addition to reading labels, headings, and captions, read any text that accompanies the visual. Make sure you understand the visual in its original context. For informational graphics, make sure you understand exactly what information is being represented. (This may seem obvious, but it is easy to misread graphic information. Take the time to examine it carefully.)
- **Evaluate sources carefully and record source information.** When you look for visual media to complement your presentation, you are conducting research. Apply the same standards you used for your research paper. Choose reliable sources, such as reputable news organizations, government and nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions. Verify data in additional sources. Finally, be sure to document all source information as you proceed.

Searching Efficiently for Visual Media

You will probably find it most efficient to use the Internet to search for visual aids. Many students begin by typing keywords into a search engine to locate related images. However, this search technique is not necessarily efficient, for several reasons:

- It often pulls up hundreds or even thousands of images, which may be only loosely related to your search terms.

- It can sometimes be difficult to understand the image in its original context.
- It can be hard to find copyright information about how you may use the image.

A more efficient strategy is to identify a few sources that are likely to have what you are looking for, and then search within those sites. For instance, if you need a table showing average life expectancy in different countries, you might begin with the website of the World Health Organization. If you hope to find images related to current events, news publications are an obvious choice. The Library of Congress website includes many media related to American history, culture, and politics.

Searching this way has the following advantages:

- You will often find what you are looking for faster because you are not wasting time scrolling through many irrelevant results.
- If you have chosen your sources well, you can be reasonably certain that you are getting accurate, up-to-date information.
- Images and informational graphics produced by reputable sources are likely to be high quality—easy to read and well designed.

If you do choose to use a search engine to help you locate visual media, make sure you use it wisely. Begin with a clear idea of what you are looking for. Use the advanced search settings to narrow your search. When you locate a relevant image, do not download it immediately. Read the page or site to make sure you understand the image in context. Finally, read the site's copyright or terms of use policy—usually found at the bottom of the home page—to make sure you may use the material.

If you are unable to find what you are looking for on the Internet consider using print sources of visual media. You may choose to mount these for display or scan them and incorporate the files into an electronic presentation. (Scanning printed pages may lower the quality of the image. However, if you are skilled at using photo-editing software, you may be able to improve the quality of the scanned image.)

Inserting Hyperlinks in an Electronic Presentation

If you are working with images, audio, or video footage available online, you may wish to insert a link within your presentation. Then, during your presentation, you can simply click the link to open the website in a separate window and toggle between windows to return to your presentation slides.

To insert a hyperlink within your presentation, click on "insert" in the toolbar and then select hyperlink from the menu. Doing so will open a dialog box where you can paste your link and modify the accompanying display text shown on your slide.

Copyright and Fair Use

Before you download (or scan) any visual media, make sure you have the right to use it. Most websites state their copyright and terms of use policy on their home page. In general, you may not use other people's visual media for any commercial purpose without contacting the copyright holder to obtain permission and pay any specified fees.

Copyright restrictions are somewhat more ambiguous when you wish to download visual media for educational uses. Some educational uses of copyrighted materials are generally considered fair use—meaning that it is legally and ethically acceptable to use the material in your work. However, do not assume that because you are using the media for an educational purpose, you are automatically in the clear. Make sure your work meets the guidelines in the following checklist. If it does, you can be reasonably confident that it would be considered fair use in a court of law and always give credit to the source.

Checklist 8.3

Media Fair Use Checklist

- You are using the media for educational purposes only.
- You will make the work available only for a short period and to a limited audience. For instance, showing a copyrighted image in a classroom presentation is acceptable. Posting a presentation with copyrighted images online is problematic. In addition, avoid any uses that would allow other people to easily access and reproduce the work.

- You have used only as much of the work as needed for your purposes. For video and audio footage, limit your use to no more than 10 percent of the media—five minutes of an hour-long television show, for example. Image use is harder to quantify, but you should avoid using many images from the same source.
- You are using the media to support your own ideas, not replace them. Your use should include some commentary or place the media in context. It should be a supporting player in your presentation—not the star of the show.
- You have obtained the material legally. Purchase the media if necessary rather than using illegally pirated material.
- Your use of the media will not affect the copyright holder or benefit you financially.

By following these guidelines, you are respecting the copyright holder's right to control the distribution of the work and to profit from it.

Writing at Work

In some fields, such as teaching, job applicants often submit a professional portfolio to a prospective employer. Recent college graduates may include relevant course work in their portfolios or in applications to graduate school. What should you do if your course work uses copyrighted visual media?

This use of media is acceptable according to fair use guidelines. Even though you are using the work for your personal professional advancement, it is not considered an infringement on copyright as long as you follow the additional guidelines listed in the previous checklist.

Crediting Sources

As you conduct your research, make sure you document sources as you proceed. Follow the guidelines when you download images, video, or other media from the Internet or capture media from other sources. Keep track of where you accessed the media and where you can find additional information about it. You may also provide a references page at the end of the presentation to cite not only media and images but also the information in the text of your presentation.

Write captions or other explanatory text for visual media created by others, just as you would for media you created. Doing so helps keep your audience informed. It also helps ensure that you are following fair use guidelines by presenting the media with your commentary, interpretation, or analysis. In your caption or elsewhere in your presentation, note the source of any media you did not create yourself. You do not need to provide a full bibliographical citation, but do give credit where it is due.

Exercise 3

In this exercise, you will locate visual aids created by others and continue developing the work you began earlier. Complete these steps.

1. Revisit the ideas you developed in Exercise 1. Choose at least two ideas for which it would make more sense to find the visual aid than to create it yourself.
2. Use the search tips provided in this section to locate at least two visual aids from reputable sources that you can use. Prepare them for your presentation by adding clarifying text as needed. Be sure to credit your source.
3. Incorporate the visual aids you created in Exercise 2 and Exercise 3 into your presentation. This may involve preparing physical copies for display or inserting graphic files into an electronic presentation.

4. Take some time now to review how you will integrate the visual and verbal components of your presentation.

- If you are working with presentation software, refine your slides. Make sure the visual approach is consistent and suits your topic. Give your text a final proofread.
- If you are not using presentation software, review the annotated outline you created in Exercise 1. Update it as needed to reflect your current plan. Also, determine how you will physically set up your visual aids.

Contributors and Attributions

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8.3: Giving a Presentation

Figure: Image by Pixabay

By this time, you have already completed much of the preparation for your presentation. You have organized your ideas and planned both the textual and visual components of your presentation. Still, you may not feel quite ready to speak in front of a group.

Public speaking is stressful. In fact, some researchers have found that a large percentage of people surveyed rate public speaking as their number one fear. Most people feel at least a little bit nervous at the prospect of public speaking.

At the same time, it is an increasingly necessary skill in the workplace. A human resource manager presents company policies and benefits plans to large groups of employees. An entrepreneur presents the idea for a new business to potential investors. A nurse might chair a staff meeting to introduce new hospital procedures. A police officer might present crime-prevention tips at a community meeting. In some fields, such as training and teaching, speaking in public is a regular job requirement.

In this section, you will learn strategies for becoming a confident, effective speaker. You have already taken the major steps toward making your presentation successful, as a result of the content planning you did in Section 8.1 and Section 8.2. Now, it is time to plan and practice your delivery.

What Makes a Speaker Effective?

Think about times you have been part of the audience for a speech, lecture, or other presentation. You have probably noticed how certain traits and mannerisms work to engage you and make the experience enjoyable. Effective speakers project confidence and interest in both their audience and their subject matter. They present ideas clearly and come across as relaxed but in control.

In contrast, less effective speakers may seem anxious or, worse, apathetic. They may be difficult to hear or understand, or their body language may distract from their message. They have trouble making a connection with their audience. This can happen even when the speaker knows his or her material and has prepared effective visual aids.

In both cases, two factors contribute to your overall impression of the speaker: voice and body language. The following sections discuss specific points to focus on.

Finding Your Voice

Most people do not think much about how their voices come across in everyday conversations. Talking to other people feels

natural. Unfortunately, speaking in public does not, and that can affect your voice. For instance, many people talk faster when they give presentations, because they are nervous and want to finish quickly. In addition, some traits that do not matter too much in ordinary conversation, such as a tendency to speak quietly, can be a problem when speaking to a group. Think about the characteristics discussed in the following section and how your own voice might come across.

Resonance

One quality of a good speaking voice is resonance, meaning strength, depth, and force. This word is related to the word *resonate*. Resonant speech begins at the speaker's vocal cords and resonates throughout the upper body. The speaker does not simply use his or her mouth to form words, but instead projects from the lungs and chest. (That is why having a cold can make it hard to speak clearly.)

Some people happen to have powerful, resonant voices. But even if your voice is naturally softer or higher pitched, you can improve it with practice.

- Take a few deep breaths before you begin rehearsing.
- Hum a few times, gradually lowering the pitch so that you feel the vibration not only in your throat but also in your chest and diaphragm.
- Try to be conscious of that vibration and of your breathing while you speak. You may not feel the vibration as intensely, but you should feel your speech resonate in your upper body, and you should feel as though you are breathing easily.
- Keep practicing until it feels natural.

Enunciation

Enunciation refers to how clearly you articulate words while speaking. Try to pronounce words as clearly and accurately as you can, enunciating each syllable. Avoid mumbling or slurring words. As you rehearse your presentation, practice speaking a little more slowly and deliberately. Ask someone you know to give you feedback.

Volume

Volume is simply how loudly or softly you speak. Shyness, nervousness, or overenthusiasm can cause people to speak too softly or too loudly, which may make the audience feel frustrated or put off. Here are some tips for managing volume effectively:

- Afraid of being too loud, many people speak too quietly. As a rule, aim to use a slightly louder volume for public speaking than you use in conversation.
- Consider whether you might be an exception to the rule. If you know you tend to be loud, you might be better off using your normal voice or dialing back a bit. This also may depend on the size of the audience.
- Think about volume in relation to content. Main points should usually be delivered with more volume and force. However, lowering your voice at crucial points can also help draw in your audience or emphasize serious content.

Pitch

Pitch refers to how high or low a speaker's voice is. The overall pitch of people's voices varies among individuals. We also naturally vary our pitch when speaking. For instance, our pitch gets higher when we ask a question and often when we express excitement. It often gets lower when we give a command or want to convey seriousness.

A voice that does not vary in pitch sounds monotonous, like a musician playing the same note repeatedly. Keep these tips in mind to manage pitch:

- Pitch, like volume, should vary with your content. Evaluate your voice to make sure you are not speaking at the same pitch throughout your presentation.
- It is fine to raise your pitch slightly at the end of a sentence when you ask a question. However, some speakers do this for every sentence, and as a result, they come across as tentative and unsure. Notice places where your pitch rises, and make sure the change is appropriate to the content.
- Lower your pitch when you want to convey authority. But do not overdo it. Questions should sound different from statements and commands.

- Chances are, your overall pitch falls within a typical range. However, if your voice is very high or low, consciously try to lower or raise it slightly.

Pace

Pace is the speed or rate at which you speak. Speaking too fast makes it hard for an audience to follow the presentation. The audience may become impatient.

Many less experienced speakers tend to talk faster when giving a presentation because they are nervous, want to get the presentation over with, or fear that they will run out of time. If you find yourself rushing during your rehearsals, try these strategies:

- Take a few deep breaths before you speak. Make sure you are not forgetting to breathe during your presentation.
- Identify places where a brief, strategic pause is appropriate—for instance, when transitioning from one main point to the next. Build these pauses into your presentation.
- If you still find yourself rushing, you may need to edit your presentation content to ensure that you stay within the allotted time.

If, on the other hand, your pace seems sluggish, you will need to liven things up. A slow pace may stem from uncertainty about your content. If that is the case, additional practice should help you. It also helps to break down how much time you plan to spend on each part of the presentation and then make sure you are adhering to your plan.

Tip

Pace affects not only your physical presentation but also the point of view; slowing down the presentation may allow your audience to further comprehend and consider your topic. Pace may also refer to the rate at which PowerPoint slides appear. If either the slide or the animation on the slide automatically appears, make sure the audience has adequate time to read the information or view the animation before the presentation continues.

Tone

Tone is the emotion you convey when speaking—excitement, annoyance, nervousness, lightheartedness, and so forth. Various factors, such as volume, pitch, and body language, affect how your tone comes across to your audience.

Before you begin rehearsing your presentation, think about what tone is appropriate for the content. Should you sound forceful, concerned, or matter-of-fact? Are there places in your presentation where a more humorous or more serious tone is appropriate? Think about the tone you should project, and practice setting that tone.

Exercise 1

In this exercise, you will work on refining the oral delivery of the annotated outline you developed in Exercise 4 of Section 8.1.

1. Set up a microphone to record yourself. (You may use a webcam if you wish.) For this exercise, assess yourself on your verbal delivery only, not your body language.)
2. Rehearse and record your presentation.
3. Replay the recording and assess yourself using the following criteria: resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone. Rate yourself from one to five on each criterion, with five being the highest rating. Determine which areas are strengths and which areas you need to improve.
4. If you wish, ask another person to evaluate your presentation.

Figure: Image by Pixabay

The Power of Body Language

The nonverbal content of a presentation is just as important as the verbal delivery. A person's body language—eye contact, facial expressions, posture, gestures, and movement—communicates a powerful message to an audience before any words are spoken.

People interpret and respond to each other's body language instinctively. When you talk to someone, you notice whether the other person is leaning forward or hanging back, nodding in agreement or disagreement, looking at you attentively or looking away. If your listener slouches, fidgets, or stares into space, you interpret these nonverbal cues as signs of discomfort or boredom. In everyday conversations, people often communicate through body language without giving it much conscious thought. Mastering this aspect of communication is a little more challenging, however, when you are giving a presentation. As a speaker, you are onstage. It is not easy to see yourself as your audience sees you.

Think about times you have been part of a speaker's audience. You have probably seen some presenters who seemed to own the room, projecting confidence and energy and easily connecting with the audience. Other presenters may have come across as nervous, gloomy, or disengaged. How did body language make a difference?

Three factors work together powerfully to convey a nonverbal message: eye contact, posture, and movement.

Eye Contact and Facial Expressions

"Maintain eye contact" is a common piece of public-speaking advice—so common it may sound elementary and clichéd. Why is that simple piece of advice so hard to follow?

Maintaining eye contact may not be as simple as it sounds. In everyday conversation, people establish eye contact but then look away from time to time, because staring into someone's eyes continuously feels uncomfortably intense. Two or three people conversing can establish a comfortable pattern of eye contact. But how do you manage that when you are addressing a group?

The trick is to focus on one person at a time. Zero in on one person, make eye contact, and maintain it just long enough to establish a connection. (A few seconds will suffice.) Then move on. This way, you connect with your audience, one person at a time. As you proceed, you may find that some people hold your gaze and others look away quickly. That is fine, as long as you connect with people in different parts of the room.

Pay attention to your facial expressions as well. If you have thought about how you want to convey emotion during different parts of your presentation, you are probably already monitoring your facial expressions as you rehearse. Be aware that the pressure of presenting can make your expression serious or tense without your realizing it.

Tip

If you are speaking to a very large group, it may be difficult to make eye contact with each individual. Instead, focus on a smaller group of persons or one row of people at time. Look in their direction for a few seconds and then shift your gaze to another small group in the room.

Posture

While eye contact establishes a connection with your audience, your posture establishes your confidence. Stand straight and tall with your head held high to project confidence and authority. Slouching or drooping, on the other hand, conveys timidity, uncertainty, or lack of interest in your own presentation.

It will not seem natural, but practice your posture in front of a mirror. Take a deep breath and let it out. Stand upright and imagine a straight line running from your shoulders to your hips to your feet. Rock back and forth slightly on the balls of your feet until your weight feels balanced. You should not be leaning forward, backward, or to either side. Let your arms and hands hang loosely at your sides, relaxed but not limp. Then lift your chin slightly and look into your own eyes. Do you feel more confident?

You might not just yet. In fact, you may feel overly self-conscious or downright silly. In time, however, maintaining good posture will come more naturally, and it will improve your effectiveness as a speaker.

Tip

Nervousness affects posture. When feeling tense, people often hunch up their shoulders without realizing it. (Doing so just makes them feel even tenser and may inhibit breathing, which can affect your delivery.) As you rehearse, relax your shoulders so they are not hunched forward or pushed back unnaturally far. Stand straight but not rigid. Do not try to suck in your stomach or push out your chest unnaturally. You do not need to stand like a military officer, just a more confident version of yourself.

Movement and Gestures

The final piece of body language that helps tie your presentation together is your use of gestures and movement. A speaker who barely moves may come across as wooden or lacking energy and emotion. Excessive movement and gestures, on the other hand, are distracting. Strive for balance.

A little movement can do a lot to help you connect with your audience and add energy to your presentation. Try stepping forward toward your audience at key moments where you really want to establish that personal connection. Consider where you might use gestures such as pointing, holding up your hand, or moving your hands for emphasis. Avoid putting your hands in your pockets or clasping them in front of or behind you.

Writing at Work

When you give a presentation at work, wearing the right outfit can help you feel more poised and confident. The right attire can also help you avoid making distracting gestures. While you talk, you do not want to be tugging on necktie tied too tight or wobbling on flimsy high-heeled shoes. Choose clothing that is appropriately professional and comfortable.

Exercise 2

In this exercise, present the same oral presentation from Exercise 1, but this time, evaluate your body language.

1. Set up a video camera to record yourself, or ask someone else to evaluate you.
2. Rehearse and, if applicable, record your presentation.

3. Replay the recording and assess yourself (or have your companion assess you) on the following criteria: eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures. Rate yourself from one to five on each criterion, with five being the highest rating. Determine in which areas you have strength and in which areas you need to improve.

Rehearsing Your Presentation and Making Final Preparations

Practice is essential if you want your presentation to be effective. Speaking in front of a group is a complicated task because there are so many components to stay on top of—your words, your visual aids, your voice, and your body language. If you are new to public speaking, the task can feel like juggling eggs while riding a unicycle. With experience, it gets easier, but even experienced speakers benefit from practice.

Take the time to rehearse your presentation more than once. Each time you go through it, pick another element to refine. For instance, once you are comfortable with the overall verbal content, work on integrating your visuals. Then focus on your vocal delivery and your body language. Multiple practice sessions will help you integrate all of these components into a smooth, effective presentation.

Practice in front of another person (or a small group) at least once. Practicing with a test audience will help you grow accustomed to interacting with other people as you talk, and it will give you a chance to get feedback from someone else's perspective. Your audience can help you identify areas to improve.

Just as important as identifying areas for improvement, your audience can encourage you not to be too hard on yourself. When preparing for an oral presentation, many people are their own worst critics. They are hyperconscious of any flaws in their presentation, real or imagined. A test audience can provide honest feedback from a neutral observer who can provide support and constructive critique.

Managing Your Environment

Part of being a good presenter is managing your environment effectively. Your environment may be the space, the sound levels, and any tools or equipment you will use. Take these factors into account as you rehearse. Consider the following questions:

- Will you have enough space to move around in? Consider whether you might need to rearrange chairs or tables in the room in advance.
- Do you have enough space to display your visual aids? If you are using slides, where will you project the images?
- Will the lighting in the room need to be adjusted for your presentation? If so, where are the light switches located? How are window coverings opened or closed?
- Will your audience be able to hear you? Does the environment have any distracting noises, such as heating or cooling vents, outside traffic, or noisy equipment or machines? If so, how can you minimize the problem? Will you need a microphone?
- Do you have access to any technical equipment you need, such as a laptop computer, a projector, or a CD or DVD player? Are electrical outlets conveniently placed and functional?

You may not be able to control every aspect of the environment to your liking. However, by thinking ahead, you can make the best of the space you have to work in. If you have a chance to rehearse in that environment, do so.

Engaging Your Audience: Planning a Question-and-Answer Session

Rehearsing your presentation will help you feel confident and in control. The most effective presenters do not simply rehearse the content they will deliver. They also think about how they will interact with their audience and respond effectively to audience input.

An effective way to interact is to plan a brief question-and-answer (Q&A) session to follow your presentation. Set aside a few minutes of your allotted time to address audience questions. Plan ahead. Try to anticipate what questions your audience might have, so you can be prepared to answer them. You probably will not have enough time to cover everything you know about the topic in your presentation. A Q&A session can give you an opportunity to fill in any gaps for your audience.

Finally, accept that interacting with your audience means going with the flow and giving up a little of your control. If someone

asks a question you were not anticipating and cannot answer, simply admit you do not know and make a note to follow up.

Writing at Work

Increasingly, employees need to manage a virtual environment when giving presentations in the workplace. You might need to conduct a webinar, a live presentation, meeting, workshop, or lecture delivered over the web; run an online Q&A chat session; or coordinate a conference call involving multiple time zones.

Preparation and rehearsal can help ensure that a virtual presentation goes smoothly. Complete a test run of any software you will use. Ask a coworker to assist you to ensure that both you and the audience have all the tools needed and that the tools are in working order. Make sure you have contact information for all the key meeting attendees. Finally, know whom to call if something goes wrong, and have a backup plan.

Exercise 3

If you have not yet rehearsed in front of an audience, now is the time. Ask a peer (or a small group of people) to observe your presentation, provide a question-and-answer session, and have your audience provide feedback on the following:

- The overall quality of your content (clarity, organization, level of detail)
- The effectiveness of your visual aids
- Your vocal delivery (resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone)
- The effectiveness of your body language (eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures)
- Your response to questions the audience posed during the question-and-answer session

Use your audience's feedback to make any final adjustments to your presentation. For example, could you clarify your presentation to reduce the number of questions—or enhance the quality of the questions—the audience asked during the question-and-answer session?

Coping with Public-Speaking Anxiety

The tips in this chapter should help you reduce any nervousness you may feel about public speaking. Although most people are a little anxious about talking to a group, the task usually becomes less intimidating with experience and practice.

Preparation and practice are the best defenses against public-speaking anxiety. If you have made a serious effort to prepare and rehearse, you can be confident that your efforts will pay off. If you still feel shaky, try the following strategies:

- Take care of your health. In the days leading up to your presentation, make sure you get plenty of sleep and eat right. Exercise to help cope with tension. Avoid caffeine if it makes you jittery.
- Use relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, and stretching to help you feel calm and focused on the day of your presentation.
- Visualize yourself giving a successful presentation. Image yourself succeeding. It will make you feel more confident.
- Put things into perspective. What is the worst that could happen if anything went wrong? Many people have given less-than-perfect presentations and lived to tell about it! Of course, you should make your best effort, but if something does go wrong, you can use it as a learning experience.
- Understand that you may not be able to overcome your nervousness completely. Feeling a little anxious can help you stay alert and focused. If you do not feel confident, try to "fake it until you make it."

Exercise 4

To practice overcoming public-speaking anxiety, ask a family member, coworker, or peer to view a rehearsal of the presentation. Schedule the rehearsal at a time that works for you, and plan to get plenty of rest the night before. After the presentation, answer the following questions.

1. When did you feel most nervous during the presentation? Make a note on your outline of the most nervous moments. Next to this note, add one strategy that may ease your anxiety. For example, you could add a reminder to relax, such as, “Take a deep breath here!” or a few words of encouragement, such as, “You are doing a great job!”
2. Ask your rehearsal audience for feedback on which moments of the presentation seemed most nerve wrecking for you. What nonverbal or verbal clues indicated to your audience that you were nervous? Which were most distracting to the audience? Make a note of these clues and practice the presentation again; be aware of how you show your anxiety and try to lessen these distractions.

Contributors and Attributions

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8.4: Key Takeaways

- An effective presentation presents ideas more concisely than a written document and uses media to explain ideas and hold the audience's interest.
- Like an essay, a presentation should have a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Good writers structure their presentations based on the thesis, or point of view; main ideas; and key supporting details and create a presentation outline to organize their ideas.
- Annotating a presentation outline is a useful way to coordinate different parts of the presentation and manage time effectively.
- Visual aids are most effective when they are chosen with the purpose and audience in mind. They serve to add emotional impact to a presentation and to organize information more clearly.
- Visual aids should always be clearly related to the presenter's ideas. Captions, labels, and other explanatory text help make the connection clear for the audience.
- Like writing, developing the visual components of a presentation is a process. It involves generating ideas, working with them in a draft format, and then revising and editing one's work.
- Visual aids can be divided into two broad categories—image-based media and informational graphics.
- Widely available software programs make it relatively easy to create visual aids electronically, such as photo images, charts, and graphs.
- When using visual aids created by others, it is important to apply good research skills, follow guidelines for fair use, and credit sources appropriately.
- Delivering an effective speech requires paying attention to both verbal delivery and body language.
- Good speakers rehearse their presentation and, if necessary, get feedback from others to help them refine their presentation before they deliver it.
- Monitoring one's vocal delivery involves paying attention to resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone.
- Monitoring one's body language involves paying attention to eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures.
- Good speakers plan ahead to help them manage the presentation effectively.

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9: ARGUMENTATION - PURPOSE AND PERSUASION IN WRITING

9.1: Paragraph Types and Purposes

9.2: Narration, Description, and Classification

9.3: Definition

9.4: Comparison and Contrast

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9.6: Process Analysis

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9.7.4: A Sample Expository and Persuasive Essay

9.8: Key Takeaways

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9.1: Paragraph Types and Purposes

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Paragraphs Types and Purposes

Paragraph types and paragraph purpose are two different things. Paragraph types can generally be categorized as introduction, body, or conclusion. They can also be described by their form, generally inductive and deductive. Finally, paragraphs can also be categorized by their purposes, which can be to introduce, to conclude, to compare or contrast, to narrate, to describe, to classify, to define, to show cause and effect, to show a process, to inform, to summarize, to evaluate, to synthesize, and to persuade. Many times, a paragraph may do more than one of these things at the same time, so sentences serve these purposes instead. Conversely, sometimes a whole essay will generally serve one of these purposes. In this chapter, examples will focus on paragraphs (rather than an entire essay) because the paragraph is the form in which your purpose most likely will take shape in a college essay.

Inductive Paragraphs

Inductive paragraphs begin generally and end more specifically with a point, topic sentence, major idea or thesis. There are a few reasons someone might write an inductive sentence. In an introduction when a reader needs to be drawn into your topic before learning what your point about that topic is going to be. The second reason someone might write an inductive paragraph is if they believe the reader might disagree with their point. Therefore, they may begin with a number of facts to persuade the reader to logically lead the reader to the writer's conclusion. The other major situation in which a writer might want to use an inductive paragraph form would be to introduce an argument or idea that they are arguing against. That idea must be introduced first before arguing against it and eventually leading to the writer's point.

Using an inductive paragraph is a rhetorical choice based upon the needs and relationship of the reader to the writer. Questions writers might ask themselves when deciding whether to use an inductive paragraph are: How much does my reader know about my topic? Does my reader know what I am going to write about? Is the reader likely to agree with what I have to say?

Cohesion (see section 6.5) in inductive paragraphs can be especially tricky. Because your reader doesn't know where you are leading, writers must be careful to lead the reader slowly to the point. Transition words, semantic ties (words that relate to each other in terms of topic), and pronouns are all important to help create a cohesive inductive paragraph. The following is an example of an inductive introduction paragraph using a compare-contrast mode.

Floods, fires, hurricanes, erosion, and sea-level rise -- we see the news stories about natural disasters at an increasing rate. And while the debate about humans' role in "global warming," or climate change, has been happening for a while now, not much has happened in terms of figuring out how to prevent or lessen the damage that is occurring. Some people (including some scientists) believe that we can't prove that climate change is occurring because of anything other than various natural variations in meteorological and other environmental trends that do indeed change over the eons. They claim that since humans haven't "caused" climate change, then humans don't need to change their behavior because doing so will have no effect on the outcome. Others (most scientists and increasingly more business leaders and the general public) believe that data show such a remarkable and accelerating change in the makeup of the atmosphere, the oceans, and weather patterns since the onset of the Industrial Revolution, that claiming humans have no influence on climate change is ludicrous. They believe that humans should change their behavior to try to reverse some of the changes in the climate and prevent an existential crisis for humans and other species. The problem is that spending time fighting about who is responsible makes it less likely that those who are experiencing the effects of climate change now -- especially those who live at coastlines -- will have any planning done to manage the issues that are already arising. While ultimately, we do need to change some of our behaviors that will affect longer-term outcomes, such as no longer using natural gas in housing, action needs to occur now at all levels of government to implement policies that will assist those who are currently affected or will be very soon.

Deductive Paragraphs

Deductive paragraphs begin with their point (topic sentence), and then go on to support and develop that point. This is the most common type of paragraph in academic essays and the type with which you are probably most familiar. Many times body paragraphs are deductive, and conclusions almost always are deductive paragraphs, beginning with a more nuanced restatement of the thesis. There are a number of strategies to develop deductive paragraphs found in Chapter 6, including developing PIE paragraphs.

Summary Paragraphs

A summary shrinks a large amount of information into only the essentials. You probably summarize events, books, and movies daily. Think about the last blockbuster movie you saw or the last novel you read. Chances are, at some point in a casual conversation with a friend, coworker, or classmate, you compressed all the action in a two-hour film or in a two-hundred-page book into a brief description of the major plot movements. While in conversation, you probably described the major highlights, or the main points in just a few sentences, using your own vocabulary and manner of speaking.

Similarly, a summary paragraph condenses a long piece of writing into a smaller paragraph by extracting only the vital information. A summary uses only the writer's own words. Like the summary's purpose in daily conversation, the purpose of an academic summary paragraph is to maintain all the essential information from a longer document. Although shorter than the original piece of writing, a summary should still communicate all the key points and key support. In other words, summary paragraphs should be succinct and to the point.

Example of a Summary Paragraph

Below is a "mock" paper that a student summarized.

According to the "Monitoring the Future" Study, almost two-thirds of tenth-grade students reported having tried alcohol at least once in their lifetime, and two-fifths reported having been drunk at least once (Johnson et al.). Among twelfth-grade students, those rates had risen to over three-quarters who reported having tried alcohol at least once, and nearly three-fifths who reported having been drunk at least once. In terms of current alcohol use, 33.2 percent of U.S. tenth graders 47.0 percent of twelfth graders reported having used alcohol at least once in the past thirty days. Twenty percent and 30.2 percent, respectively, reported having been drunk in the past 30 days; 20.0 percent and 28.1 percent, respectively, reported having had five or more drinks in a row in the past two weeks (sometimes called binge drinking); and 1.3 percent and 3.1 percent, respectively, reported daily alcohol use (Johnson et al.).

Alcohol consumption continues to escalate after high school. In fact, eighteen to twenty-four-year-olds have the highest levels of alcohol consumption and alcohol dependence of any age group. In the first two years after high school, lifetime prevalence of alcohol use (based on 2005 follow-up surveys from the "Monitoring the Future" study) was 81.8 percent, 30-day use prevalence, and binge-drinking prevalence was 36.3 percent (Johnson et al.). Of note, college students on average drink more than their non-college peers, even though they drank less during high school than those who did not go to college (Johnson et al., Schulenberg and Magge). For example, in 2005, the rate of binge drinking for college students (one to four years beyond high school) was 40.1 percent whereas the rates for their non-college age mates was 35.1 percent.

Alcohol use and problem drinking in late adolescence vary by socio-demographic characteristics. For example, the prevalence of alcohol use is higher for boys than for girls, higher for White and Hispanic adolescents than for African American adolescents, and higher for those living in the north and north central United States than for those living in the South and West. Some of these relationships change with early adulthood, however. For example, although alcohol use in high school tends to be higher in areas with lower population density (i.e., rural areas) than in more densely populated areas, this relationship reverses in early adulthood (Johnson et al.). Lower economic status (i.e., lower educational level of parents) is associated with more alcohol use during the early high school years; by the end of high school, and during the transition to adulthood, this relationship changes, and youth from higher socioeconomic backgrounds consume greater amounts of alcohol.

A summary of the report should present all the main points and supporting details in brief. Read the following summary of the report written by a student:

Brown et al. inform us that by tenth grade nearly two-thirds of students have tried alcohol at least once, and by twelfth grade, this figure increases to over three-quarters of students. After high school, alcohol consumption increases further, and college-aged students have the highest levels of alcohol consumption and dependence of any age group. Alcohol use varies according to factors such as gender, race, geographic location, and socioeconomic status. Some of these trends may reverse in early adulthood. For example, adolescents of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to consume alcohol during the high school years whereas youth from higher socioeconomic status are more likely to consume alcohol in the years after high school.

Notice how the summary retains the key points made by the writers of the original report but omits most of the statistical data. Summaries need not contain all the specific facts and figures in the original document; they provide only an overview of the essential information.

Evaluation Paragraphs

An evaluation judges the value of something and determines its worth. Evaluations in everyday experiences are often not only dictated by set standards but also influenced by opinion and prior knowledge. For example, at work, a supervisor may complete an employee evaluation by judging the subordinate's performance based on the company's goals. If the company focuses on improving communication, the supervisor will rate the employee's customer service according to a standard scale. However, the evaluation still depends on the supervisor's opinion and prior experience with the employee. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine how well the employee performs at their job.

An academic evaluation communicates your opinion, and its justifications, about a document or a topic of discussion. Evaluations are influenced by your reading of the document, your prior knowledge, and your prior experience with the topic or issue. Because an evaluation incorporates your point of view and reasons for your point of view, it typically requires more critical thinking and a

combination of summary, analysis, and synthesis skills.

> Throughout their report, Brown et al. provide valuable statistics that highlight the frequency of alcohol use among high school and college students. They use several reputable sources to support their points. However, the report focuses solely on the frequency of alcohol use and how it varies according to certain socio-demographic factors. Other sources, such as Spoth, Greenberg, and Turissi's study and the survey I conducted among college students, examine the reasons for alcohol use among young people and offer suggestions as to how to reduce the rates. Nonetheless, Brown et al. offer a useful set of statistics from which to base further research about alcohol use among high school and college students.

Notice how the paragraph incorporates the student's personal judgment within the evaluation. Evaluating a document requires prior knowledge that is often based on additional research.

Analysis Paragraphs

An analysis separates complex materials in their different parts and studies how the parts relate to one another. The analysis of simple table salt, for example, would require a deconstruction of its parts—the elements sodium (Na) and chloride (Cl). Then, scientists would study how the two elements interact to create the compound NaCl, or sodium chloride, which is also called simple table salt.

Analysis is not limited to the sciences, of course. An analysis paragraph in the humanities fulfills the same purpose. Instead of deconstructing compounds, analysis paragraphs in the humanities typically deconstruct documents. An analysis takes apart a primary source (an essay, a book, an article, etc.) point by point. It communicates the main points of the document by examining individual points and identifying how the points relate to one another.

Take a look at a student's analysis of the journal report.

> At the beginning of their report, Brown et al. use specific data regarding the use of alcohol by high school students and college-aged students, which is supported by several studies. Later in the report, they consider how various socioeconomic factors influence problem drinking in adolescence. The latter part of the report is far less specific and does not provide statistics or examples.
>
> The lack of specific information in the second part of the report raises several important questions. Why are teenagers in rural high schools more likely to drink than teenagers in urban areas? Where do they obtain alcohol? How do parental attitudes influence this trend? A follow-up study could compare several high schools in rural and urban areas to consider these issues and potentially find ways to reduce teenage alcohol consumption.

Notice how the analysis does not simply repeat information from the original report; rather, it considers how the points within the report relate to one another. By doing this, the student uncovers a discrepancy between the points that are backed up by statistics and those that require additional information. Analyzing a document involves a close examination of each of the individual parts and how they work together.

Synthesis Paragraphs

A synthesis combines two or more items to create an entirely new item. Consider the electronic musical instrument aptly named the synthesizer. It looks like a simple keyboard but displays a dashboard of switches, buttons, and levers. With the flip of a few switches, a musician may combine the distinct sounds of a piano, a flute, or a guitar—or any other combination of instruments—to create a new sound. The purpose of the synthesizer is to blend together the notes from individual instruments to form new, unique notes.

The purpose of an academic synthesis is to blend individual documents into a new document. An academic synthesis paragraph considers the main points from one or more pieces of writing and links the main points together to create a new point, one not replicated in either document. Just like the musician creates new music with the synthesizer, so does the writer create a new idea

by bringing together various texts.

Take a look at a student's synthesis of several sources about underage drinking.

In their 2004 report, Brown, et al. consider the rates of alcohol consumption among high school and college-aged students and various socio-demographic factors that affect these rates. However, this report is limited to assessing the rates of underage drinking, rather than considering methods of decreasing these rates. Several other studies, as well as original research among college students, provide insight into how these rates may be reduced.

One study, by Spoth, Greenberg, and Turissi considers the impact of various types of interventions as a method for reducing alcohol consumption among minors. They conclude that although family-focused interventions for adolescents aged ten to fifteen have shown promise, there is a serious lack of interventions available for college-aged students who do not attend college. These students are among the highest risk level for alcohol abuse, a fact supported by Brown, et al.

I did my own research and interviewed eight college students, four men and four women. I asked them when they first tried alcohol and what factors encouraged them to drink. All four men had tried alcohol by the age of thirteen. Three of the four women had also tried alcohol by the age of thirteen, and the fourth had tried alcohol by the age of fifteen. All eight students said peer pressure, boredom, and the thrill of trying something illegal were motivating factors. These results support the research of Brown et al. However, they also raise an interesting point. If boredom is a factor for underage drinking, maybe additional after school programs or other community measures could be introduced to dissuade teenagers from underage drinking. Based on my sources, further research is needed to show true preventative measures for teenage alcohol consumption.

Notice how the synthesis paragraphs consider each source and use information from each to create a new thesis. A good synthesis does not repeat information; the writer uses a variety of sources to create a new idea.

TIP:

When reviewing directions for assignments, look for the verbs *summarize*, *analyze*, *synthesize*, or *evaluate*. Instructors often use these words to clearly indicate the assignment's purpose. These words will cue you on how to complete the assignment because you will know its exact purpose.

Exercise 1:

Read the following paragraphs about four films and then identify the purpose of each paragraph.

1. This film could easily have been cut down to less than two hours. By the final scene, I noticed that most of my fellow moviegoers were snoozing in their seats and were barely paying attention to what was happening on screen. Although the director sticks diligently to the book, he tries too hard to cram in all the action, which is just too ambitious for such a detail-oriented story. If you want my advice, read the book and give the movie a miss.

2. During the opening scene, we learn that the character Laura is adopted and that she has spent the past three years desperately trying to track down her real parents. Having exhausted all the usual options—adoption agencies, online searches, family trees, and so on—she is on the verge of giving up when she meets a stranger on a bus. The chance encounter leads to a complicated chain of events that ultimately result in Laura getting her lifelong wish. But is it really what she wants? Throughout the rest of the film, Laura discovers that sometimes the past is best left where it belongs.

3. To create the feeling of being gripped in a vice, the director, May Lee, uses a variety of elements to gradually increase the tension. The creepy, haunting melody that subtly enhances the earlier scenes becomes ever more insistent, rising to a disturbing crescendo toward the end of the movie. The desperation of the actors, combined with the claustrophobic atmosphere and tight camera angles create a realistic firestorm, from which there is little hope of escape. Walking out of the theater at the end feels like staggering out of a Roman dungeon.

4. The scene in which Campbell and his fellow prisoners assist the guards in shutting down the riot immediately strikes the viewer as unrealistic. Based on the recent reports on prison riots in both Detroit and California, it seems highly unlikely that a posse of hardened criminals will intentionally help their captors at the risk of inciting future revenge from other inmates. Instead, both news reports and psychological studies indicate that prisoners who do not actively participate in a riot will go back to their cells and avoid conflict altogether. Examples of this lack of attention to detail occur throughout the film, making it almost unbearable to watch.

Writing at Work

Thinking about the purpose of writing a report in the workplace can help focus and structure the document. A summary should provide colleagues with a factual overview of your findings without going into too much specific detail. In contrast, an evaluation should include your personal opinion, along with supporting evidence, research, or examples to back it up. Listen for words such as *summarize*, *analyze*, *synthesize*, or *evaluate* when your boss asks you to complete a report to help determine a purpose for writing.

Introductions and Conclusions

Introductions

Introductions are generally *inductive,* meaning that they start out very general and become very specific, ending at your thesis statement (the most specific sentence of the paragraph). The trick about how general to begin is to think about your audience. For general academic essays, the audience is other students or educated people who are NOT in your class. Choose a topic for the first sentence that everyone will know about in order to hook them in.

Once you've written your first, very general sentence, become more specific in your next sentence. Begin by mentioning the already given information, then discuss the new information. Then do the same thing in your next sentence, and so forth, until you arrive at your thesis statement (main idea for your essay). If discussing a text is part of the main purpose of your essay, be sure that the titles and authors (at least) of those texts are incorporated into the middle of your introduction with given information first then the new information (the name of the text and the author).

There are a number of different ways you can focus an introduction, depending on the purpose and topic of your essay overall.

Types of Introductions

- Historical
- Current events
- State of a controversy
- Common knowledge versus reality

Other Ways to Begin an Introduction

- Start off with a thought-provoking quotation that relates to your topic.
- Begin with a brief (2-3 sentence) story or anecdote that illustrates what you are writing about.
- Begin with an interesting fact or statistic.
- Begin with an analogy.

Example Introduction

As American as apple pie, unfortunately, racial violence is not something new to our society. It is a sad fact embedded throughout American history. It all started with the demolition of the Native Indian nations and Black slavery, added onto by Chinese railroad worker harassment, to xenophobia against Latin Americans or Hispanic descendants, and lastly the Islamophobia or Arabophobia trend, which all began since the damaging event of September 11th, 2001. All of these different discriminatory periods of time and atrocities witnessed throughout history have one thing in common: the oppression and underestimation of minorities. Violence can come in many forms, and it can be in places where it is least expected, such as at work. Violence in the workplace ranges from threats and verbal abuse to physical harassment and, in the worst cases, homicidal attacks. It can affect and involve employees, clients, customers, and anyone who is present in the scene or the surrounding. Typically, everyone's expectation of work is to get paid in return for a service. However, we are not programmed to be robots, and there are many emotions that can be involved at work. Dealing with work means dealing with people. Even if an individual works from home, there is still going to be a connection with the outside world either with a boss, coworker, client, or a visitor. Somehow, humans are going to be present even if this presence is behind a computer, a phone, or any other telecommuting machine. This connectedness, this interaction, requires us to develop interpersonal skills, and these skills must be rooted in the ability to relate in some way with others from a wide range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, there are still many people who lack the ability to deal with people from cultures other than their own, and they may be prone to violence in the workplace, especially racially motivated violence. Hence, the most common form of workplace violence stems from racism and discrimination. Nowadays, many institutions are paying closer attention to prejudice, antagonism, or any other genre of behavioral harassment and deliberate demeaning actions directed specifically toward a person or groups of people of different ethnicity. Regardless of the form of violence exhibited by the predator, whether physical or emotional, the impact will nevertheless affect the victim. Therefore, while the exact causes of workplace violence are not clear-cut, the engrained feelings of insecurity in racist individuals are one of the main triggers of workplace violence in America.

For more information about introductions and conclusions, see Chapter 5.4, "Writing Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs."

Conclusions

Conclusions are almost opposite in structure from introductions. Conclusions are generally *deductive*, meaning they start off with your main point (a reworded thesis) and then become more general. Many times, in addition to making a final statement about your main ideas, a conclusion will "look to the future" by discussing how the author hopes this topic will be treated in the future, the next step in a solution if the essay discusses a problem, or what additional study needs to be done on the topic (especially in research papers).

Example Conclusion

Child abuse is a big problem around the world, and we can't stop this violence in just one snap of a finger. We need to create solutions and one of the most effective solutions to lessen or reduce child abuse is family planning and counseling, monthly check-ups of the child, educating the child, and spreading knowledge about the services people have available. Family coaching and counseling can help reduce child abuse if the speaker talks to them clearly on how the effect of this interpersonal violence can change their lives, and if the incident already happened, the abuser should go to counseling or therapy. People need to have at least a small knowledge of child abuse, so they can help the child and talk to the abuser why abusing their children is not a solution for discipline.

Exercise 2: Article Paragraph Structure and Purpose

For each of two articles assigned for your class, in the left hand column write down what the author is "doing" in the paragraph or section (i.e., describing something, telling the history of something, explaining theories, etc.). In the right hand column, explain the purpose (why) the author is doing that in that paragraph or section. How is helpful to the audience? Break this down by paragraph for each of the articles.

Article Name: _____

Section	What is the author doing?	What is the author's purpose?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Article Name: _____

Paragraph	What is the author doing?	What is the author's purpose?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

8		

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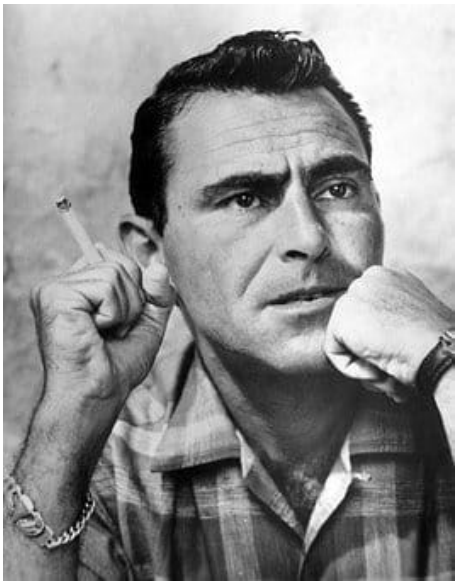
9.2: Narration, Description, and Classification



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Rhetorical modes are the different types and purposes in which we can effectively communicate through language. Sometimes writers incorporate a variety of modes in any one essay as their reader's and their own needs change. Sometimes even separate sentences will be in different modes. The modes covered in this chapter section are common modes readers and writer learn in grade school. These are generally used as types of sentences or paragraphs in college essays whereas in grade school, a student might write in one mode for the whole essay. We assume a certain familiarity with these modes in this review.

The Purpose of Narrative Writing

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

The big distinction between factual and fictional narratives is based on a writer’s purpose. The writers of factual stories try to recount events as they actually happened, but writers of fictional stories can depart from real people and events because the writers’ intents are not to retell a real-life event. Biographies and memoirs are examples of factual stories (generally speaking), whereas novels and short stories are examples of fictional stories.

You may notice that much professional essay writing in feature articles in newspapers and magazines begins with a narrative to draw the reader in. This is the common "hook" in this sort of writing. The narrative is usually a short, factual story that causes some emotion to arise in the reader while pointing to the topic that the article will be about. As a way to wrap up the feature article, the writer many times returns to this narrative in the conclusion. In college writing, however, narrative writing is used much less often, and rarely is personal narrative (your own story) used in composition classes. If you plan to use personal narrative in a college essay, be sure to check with your instructor to make sure that doing so is acceptable for the assignment. The most common use of narrative writing in a college essay is as an introductory essay in your writing class so the teacher can get to know a little about you and your reading and writing. The other common use is the inclusion of a short narrative you read in an assigned text that you plan to use as an example in an expository essay. The other academic situation in which you may need to write a narrative is in a college application essay for when you apply to four-year schools or graduate schools. For examples of such essays, click here.

Writing at Work

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

Writing a Narrative Essay

When writing a narrative essay, start by asking yourself what you want to "show" or "illustrate" with your essay. Then free write about topics or experiences that might demonstrate what you want to show. Don't "tell" what you want to convey; rather, demonstrate it through the actions of and details about the character (you for a personal statement) . For more information about free writing, see Chapter 4.6, "Prewriting Strategies." The use of strong details is crucial as you describe the events and characters in your narrative. You want the reader to emotionally engage with the world that you create in writing.

Tip

To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative.

Narration is the art of storytelling. As always, it is important to start with a strong introduction to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an event that is interesting to introduce the story and get it going.

Example Personal Statement Narrative

Please refer to this article to see some examples of personal statements.

The Purpose of Description in Writing

Writers use description to make sure that their audience is fully immersed in the words on the page. This requires a concerted effort by writers to describe their world through the use of sensory details. Description is used throughout college writing, but it's generally interspersed through the essay, especially in examples and definitions. It is unlikely that you would write a whole essay or even a whole paragraph of description in a composition class assignment, but the use of vivid, descriptive vocabulary will add spice and interest to anything that you write. That said, you will likely read essays and books that uses a lot of description to transport you to the place or thing that writer evokes. For examples, see the essay "How to Say Nothing in 500 Words."

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, sensory details are descriptions that appeal to our sense of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Your descriptions should try to focus on the five senses because we all rely on these senses to experience the world. The use of sensory details, then, provides you the greatest possibility of relating to your audience and thus engaging them in your writing, making descriptive writing important not only during your education but also during everyday situations.

Avoid empty descriptors if possible, however. Empty descriptors are adjectives that can mean different things to different people. *Good*, *beautiful*, *terrific*, and *nice* are examples. The use of such words in descriptions can lead to misreadings and confusion. *A good day*, for instance, can mean many different things depending on one's age, personality, tastes, perspectives, or situations.

Exercise 1

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

1. Night

2. Beach
3. City
4. Dinner
5. Stranger

Figure: Image by Pixabay

The Purpose of Classification in Writing

The purpose of classification is to break down broad subjects into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts. We classify things in our daily lives all the time, often without even thinking about it. Media, for example, can be classified into print, internet, and broadcast, in just one way to classify the topic (by form of transmission). Because media is so complicated, there are a number of other ways in which it can be classified as well. Smaller categories, and the way in which these categories are created, help us make sense of the world. In college writing, a portion of an essay or a paragraph may serve to classify and distinguish something. Or words as simple as adjectives, such as fiction or nonfiction, can be used to classify something. Writers generally give more space to classification in essays on topics that are complicated or in which people tend to gloss over important differences that conflate (confuse together) ideas. Classification is an analytical approach that allows the reader to discus a topic in a systematic way. It is used in classic argumentation, process analysis, compare and contrast, and cause and effect essays.

Much of what we read in college is about classification. In the various hard and social sciences, we read about classifications of biological entities, types of analysis, theories of behavior, and much, much more. Classification helps us organize information and knowledge in our minds so that we can develop our schema and understanding of a topic. Sometimes classifications can be too rigid, however, and can keep up from seeing the connections between ideas. However, it's important to practice classifying when needed because it develops our ability to analyze.

When writing about classifications, be sure to use strong details and explanations for each subcategory to help explain the differences between categories. Also, be sure to give examples to illustrate your points.

Student Sample Classification Essay

Types of Diets

A diet can be described as a plan for drinking and eating that is fixed to the amount and the type of foods and drinks that one has to ingest in order to achieve a specific lifestyle. There are several types of diets that can be divided according to their aims, such as: diets which concern making changes with one's weight, diets which are prescribed to people with certain diseases, and

diets which one follows according to his or her views and values.

The most popular diets are those which concern the changes in weight. The main factors affecting the popularity of this type of diet are the fashion industry and popularization of a healthy lifestyle. One of the diets that is popular with people who want to maintain the weight they currently have or lose it is the zone diet. This is where the carbohydrates, proteins, and fats are balanced in a ratio of 4:3:3 respectively (Pellizzon, Ricci 36). This means if the food has 40% carbohydrates, then it should have 30% proteins and 30% fats. A person who wants to lose his or her weight should take food with unrefined carbohydrates, fats such as avocados and olive oils, as well as nuts.

Another type of diet that is related to weight changes is the Weight Watchers' diet. People who would want to skip exercises to burn calories adopt this diet as well as maintaining a network of like-minded friends who form an association. The weight watchers can either meet physically or online or encourage each other on how to lose weight. This diet is more psychological than nutritional.

Many diseases are associated with lifestyle and, therefore, many diets are prescribed by doctors to people who suffer from certain diseases, such as the Atkins diet, which focuses on insulin level control. It is mostly found in food rich in fats and proteins (Wakana, et al. 24). People with high insulin levels avoid foods rich in refined carbohydrates because they trigger energy levels in the body making it release more insulin.

People suffering from epilepsy and other brain disorders are advised to take the kinetic diet. This means they reduce the uptake of carbohydrates and ingest foods that are rich in fats. This allows the body to burn fats as fuel as opposed to carbohydrates. These fats are broken down to produce ketones, which are essential for brain metabolism. However, this diet should be avoided by people suffering from diabetes 1 because their consumption may result in a diabetic coma, which may lead to death.

The third type of diets is one related to views and values. One of the most popular diets associated with religion and ethics, not science, is vegetarian. Many people are vegetarians by choice or because of their religious affiliations (Mohsen, et al. 69). Vegetarians can be divided into different categories such as semi-vegetarians, pesco vegetarians, ovo-vegetarians, living food diet vegetarians, lacto-ovo vegetarians, fruitarian vegetarians and lacto-vegetarians. The majority of vegetarians are categorized as Lacto-ovo vegetarians, that is, they do not eat animal products except honey, dairy, and eggs. Vegetarians have a longer life expectancy, suffer less from diseases and have a lower body weight compared to people who eat meat.

A vegan diet is more philosophical than nutritional. People who observe this diet avoid all animal products mostly for environmental, compassionate and ethical reasons. They argue that if everybody consumed plants' products, then animals, who share the same life as human beings would suffer less and the environment would remain healthy (Wakana, et al 25).

There are people who observe the raw foodism diet (Pellizzon, and Ricci 38). They consume organic foods and drinks, which are not processed in any way. They eat uncooked food, which is mostly plant products. The four main types of raw foodists include the raw carnivores, raw omnivores, raw vegans, and raw vegetarians.

The type of diet people choose depends on reasons that propel them to follow a diet. Those people who want to take preemptive measures and avoid lifestyle diseases adopt a diet which helps them to keep balance among carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. Some people had to keep a specific diet, such as people who suffer from diabetes 1. Others follow diets that correspond with their views. There is no better or worse diet. One should choose a diet according to his or her aims.

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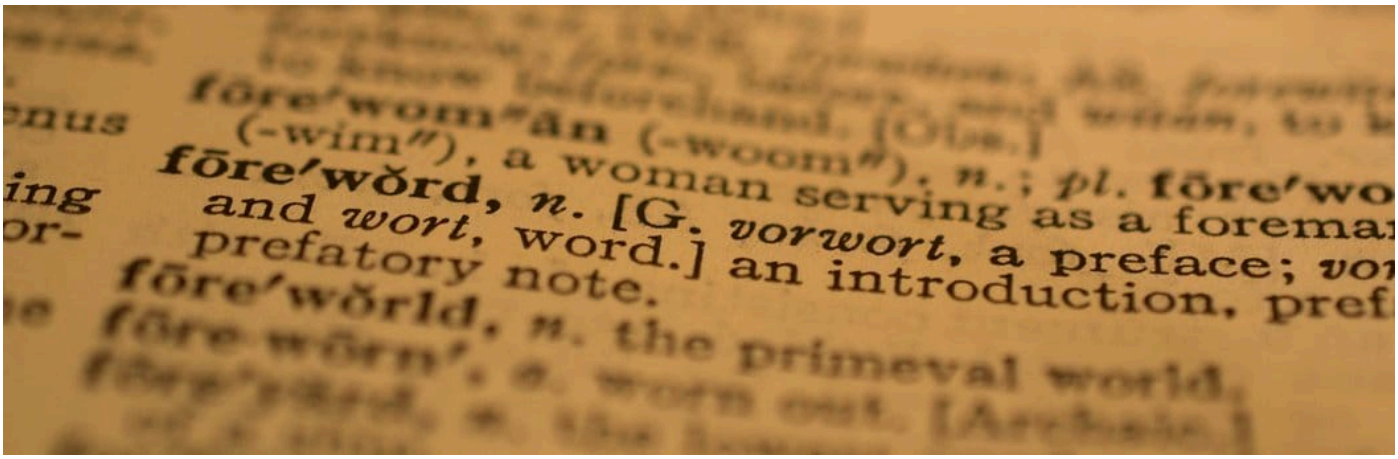
9.3: Definition



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The Purpose of Definition in Writing

The purpose of a definition essay may seem self-explanatory: the purpose of the definition essay is to simply define something. But defining terms in writing is often more complicated than just consulting a dictionary. In fact, the way we define terms can have far-reaching consequences for individuals as well as collective groups. Definition of a term may vary depending on the field in which you are reading and writing.

Take, for example, a word like *alcoholism*. The way in which one defines alcoholism depends on its legal, moral, and medical contexts. Lawyers may define alcoholism in terms of its legality; parents may define alcoholism in terms of its morality; and doctors will define alcoholism in terms of symptoms and diagnostic criteria. Think also of terms that people tend to debate in our broader culture. How we define words, such as *marriage, violence,* and *climate change*, has enormous impact on policy decisions and even on daily decisions. Think about conversations couples may have in which words like *commitment*, *respect*, or *love* need clarification.

Defining terms within a relationship, or any other context, can at first be difficult, but once a definition is established between two people or a group of people, it is easier to have productive dialogs. Definitions, then, establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse, which is why they are so important.

Tip

When writing definition essays, avoid terms that are too simple, that lack complexity. Think in terms of concepts, such as *hero*, *immigration*, or *loyalty*, rather than physical objects. Definitions of concepts, rather than objects, are often fluid and contentious, making for a more effective definition essay.

Writing at Work

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

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, write what your definition of violence is; not an example, but a definition that would cover all types of violence.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your responses.

Using Definitions as Part of a Paragraph

Sometimes in the course of writing, you need to define a term for the particular context in which you are using the word. Always define the term before you use it so your reader will understand what you are saying. Some examples of smooth ways to include definitions into your paragraphs follow.

Why Is Transparency Important?

"Transparency" is a term that is bandied about fairly often, but what does it really mean? According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary website, "transparency" is something "transparent, especially something through which light shines." But that definition doesn't really express what it means in its common business or societal sense. The idea of transparency can be applied to objects or processes. It can apply to word choice. Transparency in a business sense means that a business explains its processes and results so that people within and outside of the company can evaluate the effectiveness of the company in relation to particular goals. For instance, a company might publish statistics about the demographics of its employee makeup by job classification. Or it may explain its business strategy or information important to accurately evaluate its financial statements. Certain laws enforce transparency -- the public visibility of and input to decision making -- on local, state, and federal government. Local governments in California must follow the Brown Act, which requires that meeting times and agendas be posted publicly for a particular amount of time before a meeting so the public has a chance to participate. State and federal legislators' voting records are public so voters can know what sort of laws their elected representatives supported or voted against. They can also know how often their representative didn't show up to vote. In terms of word choice and writing, active voice can foster transparency by ensuring the subject or agent of the sentence is clear. Transparency, therefore, aside from its literal definition, has many subtle differences in meaning depending upon the context in which the word is used.

The above paragraph defined the same term -- "transparency" -- in three different contexts and in three different ways within the sentences. First, a dictionary definition was included using a quotation. Next, a definition was paraphrased and explained in one sentence by the author. Finally, one sentence that does more than just define includes an appositive that is set off by hyphens for its definition.

The Structure of a Definition Essay

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

The rest of the essay should explain the rationale for your definition. Remember that a dictionary's definition is limiting, and you should not rely strictly on the dictionary entry. Instead, consider the context in which you are using the word. Perhaps there are theories that will help you justify your definition. Context identifies the circumstances, conditions, or setting in which something exists or occurs. Often, words take on different meanings depending on the context in which they are used. For example, the ideal leader in a battlefield setting could likely be very different than a leader in an elementary school setting. If a context is missing from the essay, the essay may be too short or the main points could be confusing or misunderstood.

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

Tip

For definition essays, try to think of concepts that you have a personal stake in. You are more likely to write a more engaging definition essay if you are writing about an idea that has personal value and importance.

Writing at Work

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

Exercise 2

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

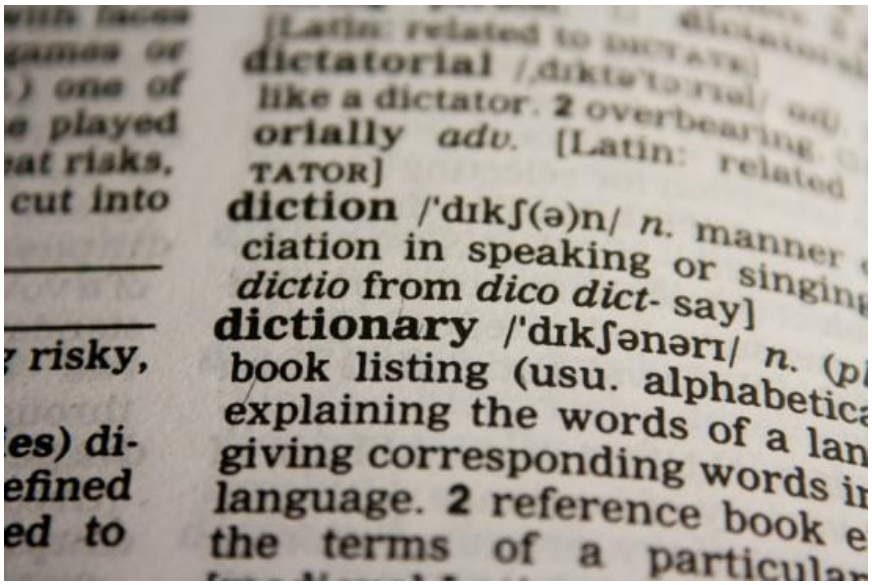
1. Bravery
2. Adulthood
3. Consumer culture
4. Work
5. Art

Writing a Definition Essay

Choose a topic that will be complex enough to be discussed at length. Choosing a word or phrase of personal relevance often leads to a more interesting and engaging essay.

After you have chosen your word or phrase, start your essay with an introduction that establishes the relevance of the term in the chosen specific context. Your thesis comes at the end of the introduction, and it should clearly state your definition of the term in the specific context. Establishing a functional context from the beginning will orient readers and minimize misunderstandings.

The body paragraphs should each be dedicated to explaining a different facet of your definition. Make sure to use clear examples and strong details to illustrate your points. Your concluding paragraph should pull together all the different elements of your definition to ultimately reinforce your thesis.



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Example Definition Essay

Defining Good Students Means More Than Just Grades

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

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

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

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

of recommendation in the future.

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

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9.4: Comparison and Contrast

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The Purpose of Comparison and Contrast in Writing

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

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

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

Model for Paragraphs of Contrast

Obstacle: more education is needed now for a "good" job and it's more expensive

Cause: economic changes: technological developments require more education, and we now compete with a whole world of workers

Opposing/different cause or emphasis: people of color have always had less access to quality education

> **Topic Sentence:** *Although technological changes have created a greater need for more education and training, people of color have always had less access to quality education and they continue to be stuck with poorer employment opportunities.*

Info from Kalleberg about why workers in general need more education today Explanation
Transition of Contrast and Contrasting sentence: *HOWEVER*, *Blacks and Latinos have always tended to receive a poorer quality education, so this problem has existed for them since the beginning and has simply continued.*
Information from Wise about unequal education Explanation Statistics from Kalleberg about types of jobs held by different demographic groups
Summing Up (Describe how these opposing viewpoints interact, and emphasize which one you agree with)

Writing at Work

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

Exercise 1

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

1. Romantic comedies
2. Internet search engines
3. Cell phones

Exercise 2

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

1. Department stores and discount retail stores
2. Fast food chains and fine dining restaurants
3. Dogs and cats

The Structure of a Comparison and Contrast Essay

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

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

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

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

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

See Figure 9.4.1, "Comparison and Contrast Diagram", which diagrams the ways to organize our organic versus conventional vegetables thesis.

Figure 9.4.1: Compare and Contrast Essay Organization

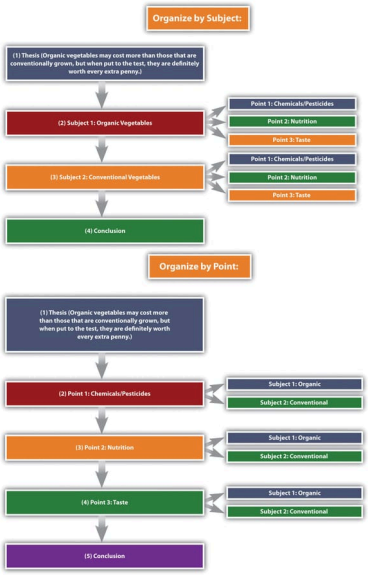

Figure: The organizational structure you choose depends on the nature of the topic, your purpose, and your audience.

Given that compare-and-contrast essays analyze the relationship between two subjects, it is helpful to have some phrases on hand that will cue the reader to such analysis. See Table 9.4.1: "Phrases of Comparison and Contrast" for examples.

Table 9.4.1 - Phrases of Comparison and Contrast

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

Exercise 3

Create an outline for each of the items you chose in Exercise 1 and Exercise 2. Use the point-by-point organizing strategy for one of them, and use the subject organizing strategy for the other.

Writing a Comparison and Contrast Essay

First choose whether you want to compare seemingly disparate subjects, contrast seemingly similar subjects, or compare and contrast subjects. Once you have decided on a topic, introduce it with an engaging opening paragraph. Your thesis should come at the end of the introduction, and it should establish the subjects you will compare, contrast, or both as well as state what can be learned from doing so.

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

After you finish analyzing the subjects, write a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the essay and reinforces your thesis. See below for a sample compare-and-contrast essay.

Writing at Work

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

Exercise 4

Choose one of the outlines you created in Exercise 3, and write a full compare-and-contrast essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, a clear thesis, well-defined and detailed paragraphs, and a fitting conclusion that ties everything together.

Example of a Comparison-Contrast Essay

Comparing and Contrasting London and Washington, DC

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

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

Both Washington, D.C., and London offer a wide array of museums that harbor many of the world's most prized treasures. While

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

Both cities also share and differ in cultural diversity and cost of living. Both cities share a very expensive cost of living—both in terms of housing and shopping. A downtown one-bedroom apartment in D.C. can easily cost $1,800 per month, and a similar "flat" in London may double that amount. These high costs create socioeconomic disparity among the residents. Although both cities' residents are predominantly wealthy, both have a significantly large population of poor and homeless. Perhaps the most significant difference between the resident demographics is the racial makeup. Washington, D.C., is a "minority majority" city, which means the majority of its citizens are races other than white. In 2009, according to the US Census, 55 percent of D.C. residents were classified as "Black or African American," and 35 percent of its residents were classified as "white." London, by contrast, has very few minorities—in 2006, 70 percent of its population was "white" while only 10 percent was "black." The racial demographic differences between the cities is drastic.

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

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9.5: Cause and Effect

Figure: Image by Pixabay

The Purpose of Cause and Effect in Writing

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

A cause is something that produces an event or condition; an effect is what results from an event or condition. The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena relate in terms of origins and results. Sometimes the connection between cause and effect is clear, but often determining the exact relationship between the two is very difficult. For example, the following effects of a cold may be easily identifiable: a sore throat, runny nose, and a cough. But determining the cause of the sickness can be far more difficult. A number of causes are possible, and to complicate matters, these possible causes could have combined to cause the sickness. That is, more than one cause may be responsible for any given effect. Therefore, cause-and-effect discussions are often complicated and frequently lead to debates and arguments.

Distinguishing between cause, effect, and correlation is very important in avoiding making overgeneralizations. Making an overgeneralization is illogical and weakens arguments, so to write strong arguments, it’s important to know the difference between cause, effect and correlation, even if you haven’t taken a statistics class.

A cause is something that comes first – something that’s already there that may or may not cause a reaction. If that cause can vary or change, and it is there first, it is considered an independent variable. For example, wet or dry weather in the fall is something that happens in Northern California. It is something that just happens. It is a cause of how good the wine grapes are that are harvested in the fall. Now, if every time the weather is wet in the fall, the grape harvest is poor or of bad flavor, and every time the weather is dry in the fall, the grape harvest is good and sweet, then we know that the weather can cause the quality of the grapes to change. Now what if we looked at the wind, also? If we looked at wind and found the quality of the grapes changed when it was windy versus when it wasn’t, we might not be able to say that the rain (or lack thereof) is the cause of the grape harvest quality – it might be the wind. Until we could test this further, we would have to say that the rain or dryness is correlated to the quality of the grape harvest. It’s not necessarily the only cause.

When there are two or more variables, -- rain/sun and wind/no wind – more specific scientific testing needs to be done to see if the independent variable is a cause. The test would need to set up each of the four possible combined conditions (rain/wind; rain/no wind; sun/wind; sun/no wind) with everything else being the same (soil, pH, type of grape, etc.) and measure each of those

against the quality of the harvest. The tester could then run statistical tests to see the likelihood that one of these independent variables caused the difference in grape quality. The tester would also have to decide how sure he would need to be to make sure this was true. Usually they feel they need to be 95% or 99% sure (which can be figured out with statistics).

Until the test actually showed that one (or more) variables caused (with 95% or 99% confidence) a difference in grape quality, we can only say that sun/rain and wind are correlated with grape quality.

Why is this important? Imagine if someone made a personal decision or if a company or government agency makes a policy based only on correlation when something else was really the major influence or cause. The policy or decision could be ineffective or even have really bad consequences. A lot of money, time, and mental energy can be wasted, and the real cause might be ignored

Exercise 1

Decide whether the following conclusions are correct, by determining whether the underlying assumptions show cause or correlation and whether the conclusion seems valid based on that.

A. The growth in murders is caused by violent video games.

B. Skin cancer patients are more likely to have certain other kinds of cancers.

C. The size of one's vocabulary determines how good of a reader you will be.

D. Smoking causes lung cancer; therefore, if you smoke, you will develop lung cancer.

E. Eating too much McDonald's causes early puberty.

F. People who live in old housing are more likely to be violent because lead paint causes people to be more aggressive.

G. Dogs are more easily tamed then cats; therefore, dogs like being with humans more than cats.

H. Older people don't need as much sleep as younger people.

I. Hockey players get in a lot of fights on the ice rink, so they must not have been treated well as children.

Tip

Use the complex nature of cause and effect to your advantage. Often it is not necessary, or even possible, to find the exact cause of an event or to name the exact effect. So, when formulating a thesis, you can claim one of a number of causes or effects to be the primary, or main, cause or effect. As soon as you claim that one cause or one effect is more crucial than the others, you have developed a thesis.

Exercise 2

Consider the causes and effects in the following thesis statements. Identify which part of the thesis statement shows cause and which part shows effect.

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

Exercise 3

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

1. Health and nutrition
2. Sports
3. Media
4. Politics
5. History

The Structure of a Cause-and-Effect Essay

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

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

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

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

Regardless of which structure you choose, be sure to explain each element of the essay fully and completely. Explaining complex relationships requires the full use of evidence, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and anecdotes.

Because cause-and-effect essays determine how phenomena are linked, they make frequent use of certain words and phrases that denote such linkage. See Table 9.5, “Phrases of Causation,” for examples of such terms.

Table 9.5 - Phrases of Causation

as a result	consequently
because	due to
hence	since
thus	therefore

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

Tip

Be wary of resorting to empty speculation. In writing, speculation amounts to unsubstantiated guessing. Writers are particularly prone to such trappings in cause-and-effect arguments due to the complex nature of finding links between phenomena. Be sure to have clear evidence to support the claims that you make.

Writing a Cause-and-Effect Essay

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

Organize your essay by starting with either the cause-then-effect structure or the effect-then-cause structure. Within each section, you should clearly explain and support the causes and effects using a full range of evidence. If you are writing about multiple

causes or multiple effects, you may choose to sequence either in terms of order of importance. In other words, order the causes from least to most important (or vice versa), or order the effects from least important to most important (or vice versa).

Use the phrases of causation when trying to forge connections between various events or conditions. This will help organize your ideas and orient the reader. End your essay with a conclusion that summarizes your main points and reinforces your thesis. See Chapter 15 to read a sample cause-and-effect essay.

Example Cause-and-Effect Essay

Effects of Video Game Addiction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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9.6: Process Analysis

Figure: Image by Pixabay

The Purpose of Process Analysis

The purpose of a process analysis essay is to explain how to do something or how something works. Reading and writing about process appears in almost every aspect of our lives, including in college. We read a recipe and follow the steps to cook something or install an appliance. We write down directions to do a task. Many YouTube videos serve as visual process analyses. From procedural manuals to the methodology sections in lab reports, process analyses range from the simple to the complicated. In all cases, however, the formula for a process analysis remains the same: The process is articulated into clear, definitive steps.

Almost everything we do involves following a step-by-step process. From riding a bike as children to learning various jobs as adults, we initially needed instructions to effectively execute the task. Likewise, we have likely had to instruct others, so we know how important good directions are—and how frustrating it is when they are poorly put together. The format of a process analysis varies depending on the context in which it is written, but they generally include many more lists than most writing does, and -- depending on the audience and purpose -- may use the imperative mood (commands), which is not generally used in regular college essays.

Writing at Work

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

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, make a bulleted list of all the steps that you feel would be required to clearly illustrate three of the following four processes:

1. Tying a shoelace
2. Parallel parking
3. Planning a successful first date

4. Giving directions to get from where you live to your school

The Structure of a Process Analysis Essay

The process analysis opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the goal of the process.

The organization of a process analysis essay typically follows chronological order. The steps of the process are conveyed in the order in which they usually occur. Body paragraphs will be constructed based on these steps. If a particular step is complicated and needs a lot of explaining, then it will likely take up a paragraph on its own. But if a series of simple steps is easier to understand, then the steps can be grouped into a single paragraph.

The time transition phrases covered in Section 12.18 are also helpful in organizing process analysis essays (see “Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time”). Words such as *first*, *second*, *third*, *next*, and *finally* are helpful cues to orient reader and organize the content of essay. Sometimes, elements of cause and effect (see "Cause and Effect Essays") and definition (see "Definition Essays") are also included in process analyses.

Figure:

If the process you are explaining has any place where someone could get hurt if the follower of the process doesn't do something in a certain way, be sure to point that out with the words "danger" or another symbol calling out the danger.

Tip

Always have someone else read your process analysis to make sure it makes sense. Once we get too close to a subject, it is difficult to determine how clearly an idea is coming across. Having a friend or coworker read it over will serve as a good way to troubleshoot any confusing spots.

Example Process Analysis Essay

How to Grow Tomatoes from a Seedling

Growing tomatoes is a simple and rewarding task, and more people should be growing them, especially because home-grown tomatoes taste so much sweeter than store-bought tomatoes. This paper walks readers through the main steps for growing and maintaining patio tomatoes from a seedling.

The first step in growing tomatoes is determining if you have the appropriate available space and sunlight to grow them.

All tomato varieties require full sunlight, which means at least six hours of direct sun every day. If you have south-facing windows or a patio or backyard that receives direct sunlight, you should be able to grow tomatoes. Choose the location that receives the most sun.

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

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

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

Once you have the gravel in the bottom of the container and the soil on top, you are ready to transplant the tomato. Pick up the tomato in the plastic container it comes in from the nursery. Turn it upside down, and holding the stem gently between your fingers, pat the bottom lightly several times, and the plant should fall into your hand. Next, you should gently break up the root ball that formed in the nursery container with your hands. Be sure to rip the roots up a bit, but don't rip them off the plant; this helps generate new root growth in the new container. Be careful not to damage the roots too much, as this could stunt the growth or even destroy the plant altogether.

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

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

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

Notice that even though the essay overall has a chronological order, other "rhetorical modes" are sprinkled throughout. For instance, this sentence contains definition: "All tomato varieties require full sunlight, which means at least six hours of direct sun every day." This sentence contains conditional (if-then) reasoning: "If you have south-facing windows or a patio or backyard that receives direct sunlight, you should be able to grow tomatoes." And this next sentence demonstrate cause-effect logic: "You do

not want a vegetable plant that has already started flowering in the nursery because it will have a more difficult time adapting to its new environment when you replant it." Most of the time these other logical explanation occur within the explanation of a direction, such as "Next, carve out a hole in the soil to make space for the plant." So, while the "commands" occur in chronological order, the explanation of those directions tend to use other types of logical thinking that this chapter explains.

Exercise 2

Choose one of the topics from Exercise 1 or a topic of your own to organize and develop a process analysis.

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9.7: Persuasion

Figure: Image by Pixabay

The Purpose of Persuasive Writing

The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies more than one opinion on the subject can be argued.

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different. An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning. It is very possible that the majority of the essays your write in college will be persuasive arguments. Therefore, almost everything in this e-book that pertains to essay writing will pertain to persuasive writing.

Tip

Most of us feel inclined to try to win the arguments we engage in. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your opinion as a valid one, not simply the right one.

The Structure of a Persuasive Essay

The following five features make up the structure of a persuasive essay:

1. Introduction and thesis
2. Opposing and qualifying ideas
3. Strong evidence in support of claim
4. Style and tone of language
5. A compelling conclusion

Creating an Introduction and Thesis

The persuasive essay begins with an engaging introduction that presents the general topic. The thesis typically appears somewhere in the introduction and states the writer's point of view.

Tip

Avoid forming a thesis based on a negative claim. For example, "The hourly minimum wage is not high enough for the average worker to live on." This is probably a true statement, but persuasive arguments should make a positive case. That is, the thesis statement should focus on how the hourly minimum wage is low or insufficient.

Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

Because an argument implies differing points of view on the subject, you must be sure to acknowledge those opposing ideas. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus it is essential that you not only address counter-arguments but also do so respectfully.

Try to address opposing arguments earlier rather than later in your essay. Rhetorically speaking, ordering your positive arguments last allows you to better address ideas that conflict with your own, so you can spend the rest of the essay countering those arguments. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else's. You have the last word.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. They know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space.

It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish. In effect, you are conceding early on that your argument is not the ultimate authority on a given topic. Such humility can go a long way toward earning credibility and trust with an audience. Audience members will know from the beginning that you are a reasonable writer, and audience members will trust your argument as a result. For example, in the following concessionary statement, the writer advocates for stricter gun control laws, but she admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

> Although tougher gun control laws are a powerful first step in decreasing violence in our streets, such legislation alone cannot end these problems since guns are not the only problem we face.

Such a concession will be welcome by those who might disagree with this writer's argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be modest in their goals and humble in their approach to get readers to listen to the ideas. See Table 9.7 "Phrases of Concession" for some useful phrases of concession.

Table 9.7 - Phrases of Concession

although	granted that
of course	still
though	yet

Exercise 1

Try to form a thesis for each of the following topics. Remember the more specific your thesis, the better.

1. Foreign policy
2. Television and advertising
3. Stereotypes and prejudice
4. Gender roles and the workplace
5. Driving and cell phones

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Bias in Writing

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have a bias toward wearing black instead of brightly colored clothes or wearing jeans rather than formal wear. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view. The ideal in persuasive writing is to let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and a respectful and reasonable address of opposing sides.

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you are apt to put forth and the better the final product will be.

The weakness of bias is when the bias begins to take over the essay—when, for example, you neglect opposing ideas, exaggerate your points, or repeatedly insert yourself ahead of the subject by using *I* too often. Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.

The Use of *I* in Writing

The use of *I* in writing is often a topic of debate, and the acceptance of its usage varies from instructor to instructor. It is difficult to predict the preferences for all your present and future instructors, but consider the effects it can potentially have on your writing.

Be mindful of the use of *I* in your writing because it can make your argument sound overly biased. There are two primary reasons:

1. Excessive repetition of any word will eventually catch the reader's attention—and usually not in a good way. The use of *I* is no different.
2. The insertion of *I* into a sentence alters not only the way a sentence might sound but also the composition of the sentence itself. *I* is often the subject of a sentence. If the subject of the essay is supposed to be, say, smoking, then by inserting yourself into the sentence, you are effectively displacing the subject of the essay into a secondary position. In the following example, the subject of the sentence is underlined:

Smoking is bad.

I think smoking is bad.

In the first sentence, the rightful subject, *smoking*, is in the subject position in the sentence. In the second sentence, the insertion of *I* and *think* replaces *smoking* as the subject, which draws attention to *I* and away from the topic that is supposed to be discussed. Remember to keep the message (the subject) and the messenger (the writer) separate. Generally speaking, if you are writing an opinion, it will be clear that is what you think. However, when comparing your ideas to others, there may be times when you must use "I" if you can't focus on the subject you are writing about.

Checklist

Developing Sound Arguments

Does my essay contain the following elements?

- An engaging introduction
- A reasonable, specific thesis that is able to be supported by evidence
- A varied range of evidence from credible sources
- Respectful acknowledgement and explanation of opposing ideas
- A style and tone of language that is appropriate for the subject and audience
- Acknowledgement of the argument's limits
- A conclusion that will adequately summarize the essay and reinforce the thesis

Fact and Opinion

Facts are statements that can be definitely proven using objective data. The statement that is a fact is absolutely valid. In other words, the statement can be pronounced as true or false. For example, 2 + 2 = 4. This expression identifies a true statement, or a fact, because it can be proved with objective data.

Opinions are personal views, or judgments. An opinion is what an individual believes about a particular subject. However, an opinion in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion. Consider the credibility of expert opinions. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience.

For example, you seek the opinion of your dentist when it comes to the health of your gums, and you seek the opinion of your mechanic when it comes to the maintenance of your car. Both have knowledge and credentials in those respective fields, which is why their opinions matter to you. But the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should he or she offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa.

In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions. Relying on one or the other will likely lose more of your audience than it gains.

Tip

The word *prove* is frequently used in the discussion of persuasive writing. Writers may claim that one piece of evidence or another proves the argument, but proving an argument is often not possible. No evidence proves a debatable topic one way or the other; that is why the topic is debatable. Facts can be proved, but opinions can only be supported, explained, and persuaded.

Using Visual Elements to Strengthen Arguments

Adding visual elements to a persuasive argument can often strengthen its persuasive effect. There are two main types of visual elements: quantitative visuals and qualitative visuals.

Quantitative visuals present data graphically. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative

visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience. For example, sometimes it is easier to understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, and line graphs are all ways of presenting quantitative data in spatial dimensions.

Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions. Photographs and pictorial images are examples of qualitative visuals. Such images often try to convey a story, and seeing an actual example can carry more power than hearing or reading about the example. For example, one image of a child suffering from malnutrition will likely have more of an emotional impact than pages dedicated to describing that same condition in writing.

Your instructor will advise you about whether and how many visual elements you may use within your essay.

Figure:

Writing a Persuasive Essay

Choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, approach the subject from an angle that interests you. Begin your essay with an engaging introduction. Your thesis should typically appear somewhere in your introduction.

Start by acknowledging and explaining points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. Also state the limits of your argument. This too helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.

Make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated.

Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors while still being true to your own voice.

Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis. See below to read a sample persuasive essay.

Exercise 2

Choose one of the topics you have been working on throughout this section. Use the thesis, evidence, opposing argument, and concessionary statement as the basis for writing a full persuasive essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, clear explanations of all the evidence you present, and a strong conclusion.

Example Persuasive Essay

Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States

The United States is the only modernized Western nation that does not offer publicly funded health care to all its citizens; the costs of health care for the uninsured in the United States are prohibitive, and insurance companies are often more interested in profit margins than providing health care. These conditions are incompatible with US ideals and standards, and it is time for the US government to provide universal health care coverage for all its citizens. Like education, health care should be considered a fundamental right of all US citizens, not simply a privilege for the upper and middle classes.

One of the most common arguments against providing universal health care coverage (UHC) is that it will cost too much money. In other words, UHC would raise taxes too much. While providing health care for all US citizens would cost a lot of money for every tax-paying citizen, citizens need to examine exactly how much money it would cost, and more important, how much money is "too much" when it comes to opening up health care for all. Those who have health insurance already pay too much money, and those without coverage are charged unfathomable amounts. The cost of publicly funded health care versus the cost of current insurance premiums is unclear. In fact, some Americans, especially those in lower income brackets, could stand to pay less than their current premiums.

However, even if UHC would cost Americans a bit more money each year, we ought to reflect on what type of country we would like to live in, and what types of morals we represent if we are more willing to deny health care to others on the basis of saving a couple hundred dollars per year. In a system that privileges capitalism and rugged individualism, little room remains for compassion and love. It is time that Americans realize the amorality of US hospitals forced to turn away the sick and poor. UHC is a health care system that aligns more closely with the core values that so many Americans espouse and respect, and it is time to realize its potential.

Another common argument against UHC in the United States is that other comparable national health care systems, like that of England, France, or Canada, are bankrupt or rife with problems. UHC opponents claim that sick patients in these countries often wait in long lines or long wait lists for basic health care. Opponents also commonly accuse these systems of being unable to pay for themselves, racking up huge deficits year after year. A fair amount of truth lies in these claims, but Americans must remember to put those problems in context with the problems of the current US system as well. It is true that people often wait to see a doctor in countries with UHC, but we in the United States wait as well, and we often schedule appointments weeks in advance, only to have onerous waits in the doctor's "waiting rooms."

Critical and urgent care abroad is always treated urgently, much the same as it is treated in the United States. The main difference there, however, is cost. Even health insurance policy holders are not safe from the costs of health care in the United States. Each day an American acquires a form of cancer, and the only effective treatment might be considered "experimental" by an insurance company and thus is not covered. Without medical coverage, the patient must pay for the treatment out of pocket. But these costs may be so prohibitive that the patient will either opt for a less effective, but covered, treatment; opt for no treatment at all; or attempt to pay the costs of treatment and experience unimaginable financial consequences. Medical bills in these cases can easily rise into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, which is enough to force even wealthy families out of their homes and into perpetual debt. Even though each American could someday face this unfortunate situation, many still choose to take the financial risk. Instead of gambling with health and financial welfare, US citizens should press their representatives to set up UHC, where their coverage will be guaranteed and affordable.

Despite the opponents' claims against UHC, a universal system will save lives and encourage the health of all Americans. Why has public education been so easily accepted, but not public health care? It is time for Americans to start thinking socially about health in the same ways they think about education and police services: as rights of US citizens.

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9.7.1: Rogerian Argumentation

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Rogerian Argumentation

Rogerian argument is an organizational technique for persuasive argument that works especially well when your reader is not likely to agree with you. It was developed by a Carl Rogers, a psychologist. This argument technique can be effective for persuasion because you obtain the "buy in," or agreement, from someone whose opinion differs from yours at the beginning. In a Rogerian argument, you demonstrate that you understand the other person's viewpoint, even that you have empathy for it. By showing this, a person is more likely to listen to your point of view.

This technique of argumentation is sorely needed right now in our civic lives. Try it in your interpersonal relationships and see how well it can work!

The organization of the Rogerian argument is very important for it to be effective. If you don't organize it this way, your argument is pointless--it won't be persuasive; rather, it will just appear confused.

Here is the organization technique:

Introduction

Write a paragraph about the topic in general just to give the context about the topic and draw the reader in. **Do not place your main idea - or even give away your opinion - in your introduction.** Think of it like playing poker or 21. You don't want to give away your hand.

Body Paragraph 1

This paragraph is where you should explain the other person's opinion on your main topic that you can concede or agree with a little bit and explain that point of view thoroughly (for a whole paragraph). **Do not place your main idea - or even give away your opinion -- in body paragraph 1 in a Rogerian argument.** The reason for explaining the other person's point of view for a whole paragraph is to show that you understand their viewpoint. People are much more likely to listen to your viewpoint if you show that you understand their viewpoint first.

Body Paragraph 2

The beginning of this paragraph will begin with a concession statement in which you acknowledge the viewpoint that you previously explained but then emphasize the problem with that viewpoint. Please see concession statements. In this paragraph you begin to give away your opinion by explaining how the idea that you wrote about in body paragraph 1 is illogical or problematic from an ethical standpoint. Explain the problem with that viewpoint for the whole \paragraph. This is your counter-argument paragraph. Please see counter-argument paragraphs for more information about this.

All Subsequent Body Paragraphs until the Conclusion

In these paragraphs you develop separate reasons for your point of view in each paragraph (remember PIE paragraphing!) This is more like what you do in a traditional, argumentative essay. **Although you are giving your opinion, do not state your thesis yet. You should be building toward it.** ·

Conclusion

Give your thesis at the beginning of your conclusion. Basically, your whole argument has led up to this. Your thesis may very well be a two-part sentence with a concession in it, which allows it to relate to the totality of your paper (including the first body paragraph). The rest of your conclusion should focus on the future. How should things be in the future with regard to this topic? What changes could be made? What needs to change in order for things to get better? Please see conclusions for more information about concluding paragraphs.

Graphic Organizer for the Body of your Rogerian Argument

Directions: *Use the graphic organizer below to organize and map out the main points of the body paragraphs of your paper.*

First, write down the opposing point of view.

Then, write down your counter-argument/refutation – or at least the main reasons.

Next, write down your first main reason for your point of view.

Next, write down your second main reason for your point of view.

Finally, write down your last main reason for your point of view. If there are more main reasons, add them in separate paragraphs.

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9.7.2: Toulmin Argumentation

Figure: Image by Pixabay

Toulmin argumentation was developed by Stephen Toulmin, a British philosopher and educator. He broke down arguments into component parts: claims, grounds, warrants, qualifiers, rebuttals, and backing. This back-argumentation method can be used to both build an argument and analyze the strength of someone else's argument (and perhaps counter-argue if the argument you are reading is weak in some way). The components of a Toulmin argument do not need to appear in any particular order, but for ease of reading, it can make sense for them to be organized as follows: Backing, Warrant, Grounds, Qualifier, Claim, Rebuttal. Typically, however, in academic essays a number of arguments nest or connect together to build an overall argument.

The Claim

The claim is the main argument -- what is being argued overall. One could think of it as a thesis of a paper, if the argument is an entire essay.

Grounds

Grounds are the evidence and facts that support a claim.

Warrant

The warrant is the stated or implied assumption that connects warrants and grounds. Sometimes a warrant may be so obvious that it is hard to identify. Other times the warrant (assumption) can be flawed (see logical fallacies).

Qualifiers

Qualifiers are statement that "hedge" the claim or state that the claim may not be true all of the time. Hedge words, such as "some," "many," "most of the time" are included in qualifying statements many times.

Rebuttals

A rebuttal is the same thing as a counter-argument. Please see the next section for more detail.

Backing

Backing is support for the warrant, even if the warrant is implied.

Example of a Simple Toulmin Argument

Here is an example of a simple Toulmin argument that can be developed further (easily into a whole essay). The part of the argument is highlighted in gray after the statement.

A number of people and organizations have been calling for turning investor-owned utilities, particularly Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), into public utilities because they think it will make the utilities more accountable. [Backing] Public utilities have boards that can be directly voted in by the people. [Warrant] There are already a number of successful public utilities throughout the U.S., including in California. [Grounds] However, this would depend on people making the right choice of directors for the utility. [Qualifier.] If this occurred, turning investor-owned utilities into public utilities in California might make PG&E more directly accountable to the people it serves in California. [Claim]

Exercise 1

Identify a claim on a social media site. Then try to identify the different components of a Toulmin argument, particularly any unstated warrants, and examine whether any component is missing or problematic (i.e., includes logical fallacies or emotional appeals).

Exercise 2

Do the same as in Exercise 1, but with an article from a popular magazine or a political speech. How many claims and Toulmin arguments can you identify in the speech or article? How are they related to each other? Does one depend on the other? Are they separate? Are some of the arguments developed logically and some not? Evaluate the various arguments you find.

Here are links to a couple of speeches you can use for Exercise 2

- Kennedy's 1961 Inaugural Speech.
- Reagan's 1981 Inaugural Speech.

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9.7.3: Counter Argument Paragraphs

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Counter-Argument Paragraphs

The purpose of a counter argument is to consider (and show that you are considering) perspectives other than your own. A counter-argument tears down other viewpoints; it does not build up your own, which you should do in separate paragraphs.

Placement of Counter-Arguments in an Essay

A counter argument can appear anywhere in the essay, but it most commonly appears:

- As part of your introduction—before you propose your thesis—where the existence of a different view is the motive for your essay. This works if your entire essay will be a counter-argument and you are not building up your own argument.
- As a section or paragraph just after your introduction, in which you lay out the expected reaction or standard position of opposing viewpoints before turning away to develop your own.
- As a quick move within a paragraph, where you imagine a counter-argument not to your main idea but to the sub-idea that the paragraph is arguing or is about to argue.
- As a section or paragraph just before the conclusion of your essay, in which you imagine what someone might object to in what you have argued. (However, this is really too late to be very effective in persuading someone to your position. It only shows you are considering other points of view.

Watch that you don't overdo it. A turn into counter argument here and there will sharpen and energize your essay, but too many such turns will have the reverse effect by obscuring your main idea or suggesting that you're ambivalent about your point of view. At the worst, it can sound like you are contradicting yourself. Writing a lead-in sentence with subordination or concession can help avoid this problem.

Example Counter-Argument

The following paragraph explains an opposing point of view to the writer's position in almost the whole paragraph. Words in **bold** *italics* explain the essential component of a counter-argument that a writer is doing in the following sentence(s).

> Considering the many challenges facing K-12 public schools, it's understandable that many people would be eager to pursue new options. Supporters of school choice point out that under the current public school system, parents with economic means already exercise school choice by moving from areas with failing or dangerous schools to neighborhoods with better, safer schools. Their argument is that school choice would allow all parents the freedom, regardless of income level, to select the school that provides the best education (Chub and Moe). Schools would then have to compete for students by offering higher academic results and greater safety. Schools unable to measure up to the standards of successful schools would fail and possibly close. ***[Acknowledge Valid Parts and move to your own viewpoint]*** Activists within the school choice movement can be applauded for seeking to improve public education, but the changes they propose would in fact seriously damage public education as a whole.

The next paragraph is the counter-argument to the previous paragraph. Notice, however, that this count-argument does have some problems. The writer doesn't distinguish between public and private charter schools and also creates some logical fallacies in the process. Counter-arguments should be logically solid, cite sources, and argue logically.

> One of the biggest dangers of school choice is the power behind large corporations specializing in opening and operating charter schools. Two notable companies are Green Dot, which is the leading public school operator in Los Angeles (Green Dot), and KIPP, which operates 65 schools in 19 different states (KIPP). These companies represent a growing trend of privatization of public schools by large corporations. It is feared that these corporations could grow to a point that public control of education would be lost. Education policy would be left in the hands of entrepreneurial think tanks, corporate boards of directors, and lobbyists who are more interested in profit than educating students (Miller and Gerson). The results of this could be just as bad or worse than what is currently happening in underperforming schools. Education should be left in the hands of professional educators and not business people with MBAs.

At this point, the writer would then begin to argue their point of view with sub-claims and facts developed in a number of paragraphs to support their thesis.

If a writer is constructing an entire essay as a counter-argument, then the writer will need to fully develop multiple, well-supported arguments against the other point of view. The writer may also want to point out any logical flaws or other errors in the argument that they oppose.

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9.7.4: A Sample Expository and Persuasive Essay

Throughout this English course, you will write a variety of essays or literary tasks. The sample essay that follows gives you an idea of what an expository or persuasive essay is. You can see how it is broken up into paragraphs and also has an introduction and conclusion. Please note that your own essays might have several more paragraphs and you will not be required to stick to the five paragraph essay.

Example Essay

This example of a persuasive essay might help you when trying to write an essay of your own.

Animal Testing in the Cosmetic Industry

Introduction

Recent pictures in the news of caged animals with metal prongs holding their eyes open to test for chemicals have burned themselves into our memories. These painful tests have been supported by the cosmetic industry in the name of science for the past 40 years. The main question in 2009 is whether or not animals testing is still necessary?
While most animal rights activists will say absolutely not, many scientists who are constantly searching for chemicals in product that cause cancers in humans still say yes. My main questions are what alternatives are there to this testing and what can be done?

Body

(Paragraph 1)
First, while some scientists say that deodorants or talcum powder cause breast or ovarian cancer, others say that more research has to be done (1), (2). Second, no matter how you look at it, we as consumers are being caught in the middle. Most of us use cosmetics in one form or other and we still need to feel safe. But is it right to inflict so much pain on innocent animals? Those poor animals should not need to suffer and die just to protect humans from harm and discomfort. What we must focus on, then, are the alternatives to animal testing.

(Paragraph 2)
What are the alternatives? The alternatives to animal testing that seem most logical would be those which replace animals in specific tests, therefore reducing the number of animals used. Another alternative is to make the tests better to lessen the animals' suffering (3). A third alternative is to use human tissue or human skin cells and avoid using animals altogether. Hopefully, these alternatives will mark a new trend in the decline of animal testing in the future.

(Paragraph 3)
What can be done? Personally, I feel that violent methods used by extreme animal rights groups is not the answer. Burning down laboratories where caged animals are tested on or where humans lose their lives are only short term and inhuman. Setting animals free may cause them even more pain and suffering. Wouldn't it be better to find ways where we as consumers can make a difference by refusing to buy animal tested products? In my opinion this would directly affect the cosmetic industry and force them to take action. Proof that some large scale action can be effective was when the EU issued the EU Cosmetic Directive, which on March 11, 2009, banned both animal testing and the marketing of animal tested products (4).

Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the new alternatives that test for harmful chemicals and the new initiatives made by the EU to ban the buying and selling of animal tested cosmetics, we can only hope that it will no longer be necessary to use animals in testing at all. As for us consumers, it is up to us to check that the products we use have not been tested on animals. Not only will we feel safe, but we will no longer have to feel guilty for making animals suffer when we buy cosmetic products.

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9.8: Key Takeaways

- Facts are statements that can be proven using objective data.
- Opinions are personal views, or judgments, that cannot be proven.
- In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions.
- The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion.
- An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue, in writing, is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way.
- It is essential that you not only address counter-arguments but also do so respectfully.
- It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish through a concession statement.
- To persuade a skeptical audience, you will need to use a wide range of evidence. Scientific studies, opinions from experts, historical precedent, statistics, personal anecdotes, and current events are all types of evidence that you might use in explaining your point.
- You should be mindful of the use of *I* in your writing because it can undercut the strength of your argument.
- In college writing, every paragraph (or part of a paragraph has a purpose). Some common purposes are summarizing, explaining, evaluating, and synthesizing, and this can be done through narration, definitions, comparing, and cause and effect, among others.
- Definitions establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse.
- Context affects the meaning and usage of words.
- The thesis of a definition essay should clearly state the writer's definition of the term in the specific context.
- The purpose of writing a comparison or contrast essay is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities between two subjects.
- There are two main organizing strategies for compare-and-contrast essays.
  - Organize by the subjects themselves, one then the other.
  - Organize by individual points, in which you discuss each subject in relation to each point.
- Use phrases of comparison or phrases of contrast to signal to readers how exactly the two subjects are being analyzed.
- The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena are related.
- The cause-and-effect essay can be organized in one of these two primary ways:
  - Start with the cause and then talk about the effect.
  - Start with the effect and then talk about the cause.
- Strong evidence is particularly important in the cause-and-effect essay due to the complexity of determining connections between phenomena.

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10: ADDING TO THE CONVERSATION WITH RESEARCH PAPERS

10.1: The Purpose of Research Writing
10.2: The Process of Writing a Research Paper
10.3: Developing a Research Proposal
10.4: Strategies for Gathering Information
10.5: Evaluating and Working with Sources
10.6: Reading and Note Taking for Research Papers
10.7: Critical Thinking and Research Applications
10.8: Creating a Rough Draft for a Research Paper
10.9: Developing a Final Draft of a Research Paper
10.10: Key Takeaways

Note

Overview of Chapter 5

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10.1: The Purpose of Research Writing

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Research Writing as Conversation

Writing and reading are both social processes though they may take place asynchronously, or not at the same time. Texts are created to be read by others, and in creating those texts, writers should be aware of not only their personal assumptions, biases, and tastes, but also those of their readers. Writing, just like speaking, therefore, is an interactive process. It is a conversation, a meeting of minds, during which ideas are exchanged, debates and discussions take place and, consensus is reached. You may be familiar with the famous quote by the 20th century rhetorician Kenneth Burke, who compared writing to a conversation at a social event. In his 1974 book, *The Philosophy of Literary Form,* Burke writes,

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him, another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment of gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress (110-111).

This passage by Burke is extremely popular among writers because it captures the interactive nature of writing so precisely. Reading Burke's words carefully, we will notice that the interaction between readers and writers is continuous. A writer always enters a conversation in progress. In order to participate in the discussion, just like in real life, you need to know what your the other people in the conversation have been talking about. So you listen (read). Once you feel you have the drift of the conversation, you say (write) something. Your text is read by others who respond to your ideas, stories, and arguments with their own. This interaction never ends!

Figure: by Alexis Brown on Unsplash

This continuing conversation is especially true in research, in which -- while reading and participating in the larger dialog of a field -- a researcher finds what the latest focuses are and what needs to be researched next to move the field or topic research forward as a whole. Now, as an undergraduate student, you are not necessarily going to conduct cutting-edge primary research to move your field forward. However, practicing research provides you the opportunity to find out the latest in a field you might be interested, as well as learn more about a subject or the world generally. It's also possible for you to conduct some primary research -- research you collect yourself -- to learn the proper methods of doing so, and practicing getting yourself into the conversation.

To write well, it is important to listen carefully and understand the conversations that are going on around you. Writers who are able to listen to these conversations and pick up important topics, themes, and arguments are generally more effective at reaching and impressing their audiences. It is also important to treat research, writing, and every occasion for these activities as opportunities to participate in the on-going conversation of people interested in the same topics and questions that interest you.

Our knowledge about our world is shaped by the best and most up-to-date theories available to them. Sometimes these theories can be experimentally tested and proven, and sometimes, when obtaining such proof is impossible, they are based on consensus reached as a result of conversation and debate. Even the theories and knowledge that can be experimentally tested (for example in sciences) do not become accepted knowledge until most members of the scientific community accept them. Other members of this community will help them test their theories and hypotheses; give them feedback on their writing and experimental methods (peer review); and keep them searching for the best answers to their questions. As Burke says in his famous passage, the interaction between the members of intellectual communities never ends. No piece of writing, no argument, no theory or discover is ever final. Instead, they all are subject to discussion, questioning, and improvement. Case in point, Einstein's theories -- and the implications of his theories -- are still being researched and tested to this day.

Figure: by Ree on Pexels

A simple but useful example of this process is the evolution of humankind's understanding of their planet Earth and its place in the universe. As you may know, in Medieval Europe, the prevailing theory was that the Earth was the center of the universe and that all other planets and the Sun rotated around it. This theory was the result of the Church's teachings, and thinkers who disagreed with it were pronounced heretics and often burned. In 1543, astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus argued that the Sun was at the center of the solar system and that all planets of the system rotate around the Sun. Later, Galileo experimentally proved Copernicus' theory with the help of a telescope. Of course, the Earth did not begin to rotate around the Sun with this discovery; it always had. Yet, Kopernikus' and Galileo's theories of the universe went against the Catholic Church's teachings at the time, which dominated the social discourse of Medieval Europe. The directors of the Inquisition did not engage in debate with the two scientists. Instead, Copernicus was executed for his views, and Galileo was sentenced to house arrest for the rest of his life for his views.

Although in the modern world, dissenting thinkers are unlikely to suffer such harsh punishment, the examples of Kopernikus and Galileo teach us two valuable lessons about the social nature of knowledge. First, Both Kopernikus and Galileo tried to improve on an existing theory of the universe that placed our planet at the center. They did not work from nothing; rather, they used beliefs that already existed in their society and tried to modify and disprove those beliefs. Time and later scientific research proved that they were right. Secondly, even after Galileo was able to prove the structure of the solar system experimentally, his theory did not become widely accepted until the majority of people in society accepted it. Therefore, new findings do not become accepted knowledge until they penetrate the fabric of social discourse and until enough people accept them as true.

Applying the Process Approach to Research Writing

The generic research paper assignment that most of us have been given in school often requires us to come up with a thesis, or position on the subject of our research before we begin researching. The crudest example of this approach goes something like this: a student writer is asked to "defend" a position he or she strongly believes in and to "support" that position with researched evidence. The assumption here is that the writer knows exactly what he she wants to say before the composing process begins. It is easy to see that, in this case, the purpose of research is to find the kinds of sources, proofs, and theories that confirm the writer's existing opinion. Thus, the definition of the term "research" itself is changed and searching for answers is replaced with a quick fix of facts, statistics, and quotes.

Suppose, for example, that you have been assigned to write a researched argument about the death penalty. Suppose also that you are against the death penalty and that, in your paper, you will try to "prove" that killing someone as a means of administering justice is morally wrong. By the way, I think that arguing for or against the death penalty, abortion rights, and other similar controversial subject in a research project is very difficult because most people, including you, the writer, have set views on each of these subjects that cannot be changed. But, we will use the example of the death penalty argument anyway because it keeps popping up in traditional research papers.

Armed with the belief that death penalty is wrong, you go to the library or browse the Internet looking for "research" to support

your thesis. Of course, because you already have your thesis, it is very tempting to look for and use only those sources that agree with you and to discard or overlook the others. If you are lucky, you find enough such sources and construct a paper that argues for the abolition of the death penalty. Ask yourself the following question, though: what have you found out or investigated during your research? Have you discovered new theories, opinions, or aspects of your subject? Did anything surprise you, intrigue you, or make you look further? If you answered "no" to these questions, you did not fulfill the purpose of true research, which is to explore, to discover, and to investigate.

Figure: by Pixabay on Pexels

The purpose of research is not to look for proofs that would fit the author's pre-existing theories, but to learn about the subject of the investigation as much as possible and then form those theories, opinions, and arguments on the basis of this newly found knowledge and understanding. And what if there is no data that prove your theory? What if, after hours and days of searching, you realize that there is nothing out there that would allow you to make the claim that you wanted to make? Most likely, this will lead to frustration, a change of the paper's topic, and having to start all over again. Not only will this inconvenience you by making you race against the clock to meat the deadline and do lots more busywork than necessary, but it will also be a waste of time because you will not learn anything new. Even if you manage to create a neat and efficient paper, it will be false research, simply jumping through hoops in order to fulfill another meaningless school assignment.

So, should you begin every research project as a disinterested individual without opinions, ideas, and beliefs? Of course, not! There is nothing wrong about having opinions, ideas, and beliefs about your subject before beginning the research process. Good researchers and writers are passionate about their work and want to share their passion with the world. Moreover, pre-existing knowledge can be a powerful research-starter. But what separates a true researcher from someone who simply looks for "proofs" for a pre-fabricated thesis is that a true researcher is willing to question those pre-existing beliefs and to take his or her understanding of the research topic well beyond what he or she knew at the outset. Speaking in terms of the process theory of writing, a good researcher and writer is willing to create new meaning, a new understanding of his or her subject through research and writing and based on the ideas and beliefs that he or she had entering the research project.

In fact, there are really two types of research papers: scientific-style research papers and literature review style research papers. We will focus on the literature review style of research paper, which is really like an extended essay, in this course. However, even a literature review depends more on the research that other people have done than does a regular essay and requires that you go into your topic with an open mind.

Reasons for Research

Figure: by Pixabay on Pexels

When you perform research, you are essentially trying to solve a mystery—you want to know how something works or why something happened. In other words, you want to answer a question that you (and other people) have about the world. This is one of the most basic reasons for performing research.

But the research process does not end when you have solved your mystery. Imagine what would happen if a detective collected enough evidence to solve a criminal case, but she never shared her solution with the authorities. Presenting what you have learned from research can be just as important as performing the research. Research results can be presented in a variety of ways, but one of the most popular—and effective—presentation forms is the research paper. A research paper presents an original thesis, or purpose statement, about a topic and develops that thesis with information gathered from a variety of sources.

If you are curious about the possibility of life on Mars, for example, you might choose to research the topic. What will you do, though, when your research is complete? You will need a way to put your thoughts together in a logical, coherent manner. You may want to use the facts you have learned to create a narrative or to support an argument. And you may want to show the results of your research to your friends, your teachers, or even the editors of magazines and journals. Writing a research paper is an ideal way to organize thoughts, craft narratives, or make arguments based on research, as well as share your newfound knowledge with the world.

Research Writing at Work

According to Greta Solomon of Forbes.com, "knowing how to write a good research paper is a valuable skill that will serve you well throughout your career. Whether you are developing a new product, studying the best way to perform a procedure, or learning about challenges and opportunities in your field of employment, you will use research techniques to guide your exploration. You may even need to create a written report of your findings. And because effective communication is essential to any company, employers seek to hire people who can write clearly and professionally. Research shows that those with better research and writing skills have a higher career trajectory and are more likely to succeed."

Writing at Work

Take a few minutes to think about each of the following careers. How might each of these professionals use researching and research writing skills on the job?

- Medical laboratory technician
- Small business owner

- Information technology professional
- Financial analyst

Exercise 1

What Might You Research at Work?

Think about the job of your dreams. How might you use research writing skills to perform that job? Create a list of ways in which strong researching, organizing, writing, and critical thinking skills could help you succeed at your dream job. How might these skills help you obtain that job?

Answer available at the end of this section.

Answer available at the end of this section.

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Answers

Exercise 1

Exercise 1

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10.2: The Process of Writing a Research Paper

Process of Writing a Research Paper

The process of writing a research paper can be a journey, one that can be difficult at times and perhaps overwhelming. But breaking down the process into parts can make it feel manageable. The process of integrated reading and writing discussed earlier in this book is amplified in a research paper. The recursiveness of the reading-writing process is also amplified, meaning that you may have to go back and forth more between reading and writing, and the order in which you do your work may be even less linear. This, combined with the generally larger scope of the research paper, is what can make research papers feel a little overwhelming. Below, you will find a general order in which the process of the research paper occurs along with some strategies to help you. The main piece of advice any instructor can give you is: Do not put off the work. The sooner you begin your exploration, research, and writing, the better. The next three general pieces of advice are to:

- Create a research question that begins with the word "why" or "how" to guide you.
- Avoid getting bogged down in the research or working with sources that don't really relate to your question.
- Annotate while you read, and as soon as you begin writing down ideas from others in a document, be sure to also write down where the thought, idea, or quote came from.

The General Process

Determine your General Topic and Evaluate What You Know about It

As you may recall, to narrow the focus of your topic, you may try free writing exercises, such as brainstorming. You may also need to ask a specific research question—a broad, open-ended question that will guide your research. You may use your research question to create a research proposal (some instructors require this). See the next session to learn more about research proposals.

Plan and Schedule

Before you start researching your topic, take time to plan your research and writing schedule. Research projects can take days, weeks, or even months to complete. Creating a schedule is a good way to ensure that you do not end up being overwhelmed by all the work you have to do as the deadline approaches.

Figure: by Plush Design Studio on Pexels

Each step of a research project requires time and attention. Careful planning helps ensure that you will keep your project running smoothly and produce your best work. Set up a project schedule that shows when you will complete each step. Think about *how* you will complete each step and what project resources you will use. Resources may include anything from library databases and word-processing software to interview subjects and writing tutors.

To develop your schedule, use a calendar and work backward from the date your final draft is due. Generally, it is wise to divide half of the available time on the research phase of the project and half on the writing phase. For example, if you have a month to work, plan for two weeks for each phase. If you have a full semester, plan to begin research early and to start writing by the middle of the term. You might think that no one really works that far ahead, but try it. You will probably be pleased with the quality of your work and with the reduction in your stress level.

As you plan, break down major steps into smaller tasks if necessary. For example, 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.

In this chapter, we will follow a student named Miguel, who is studying health care administration, as he prepares a research paper. While observing Miguel's process, you will also plan, research, and draft your own research paper. As an example of creating a plan, Miguel had six weeks to complete his research project. Working backward from a due date of May 2, he mapped out a schedule for completing his research by early April so that he would have ample time to write. Miguel chose to write his schedule in his weekly planner to help keep himself on track.

During this step of the process, it is also a good idea to plan the resources and organizational tools you will use to keep yourself on track throughout the project. Flowcharts, calendars, and checklists can all help you stick to your schedule. Always start from the time your project is due. If you have a smart phone with a task list in which you can add calendar deadlines and alarms, use that too! Decide how much time each part of the process is likely to take (and maybe multiply that amount of time by 1.5 or 2 times to get a realistic amount of time). Then schedule a deadline based on that amount of time on your calendar for each task, working backward from the due date.

Review Miguel's schedule. Key target dates are shaded. Note that Miguel planned times to use available resources by visiting the library and writing center and by meeting with his instructor.

Miguel's Research Schedule

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
March 20	21	22 Choose Topic	23 Preliminary research	24 Write research questions and working thesis	25 Write research proposal	26
27	28 Research proposal due	29 Look for sources online	30 Library	31 Evaluate sources; make source cards	April 1 Take notes →	2 →
3 →	4 →	5 Finish note cards	6 Organize notes →	7 →	8 Write outline	9 →
10	11 Outline due	12 Write draft →	13 →	14 →	15 Off – Trip to NYC	16 Off – Trip to NYC
17	18 Conference with Prof. Habib 2:00	19 Finish writing draft	20	21 Revise draft →	22 →	23 Library?
24	25	26 Finish revising draft	27 Edit draft	28 Writing Center 4:30	29 Finish editing draft	30 Create Works Cited page
May 1	2 Final draft due	3	4	5	6	7

Exercise 1

Create your own research schedule -- just as Miguel has -- but base it on your own deadlines and what you need to do.

Writing at Work

When you create a project schedule at work, you set target dates for completing certain tasks and identify the resources you plan to use on the project. It is important to build in some flexibility. Materials may not be received on time because of a shipping delay. An employee on your team may be called away to work on a higher-priority project. Essential equipment may malfunction. You should always plan for the unexpected.

Stay Organized

Although setting up a schedule is 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, software, and so forth—can help you stay on track.

Throughout your project, organize both your time and your resources systematically. Review your schedule frequently and check your progress. It helps to post your schedule in a place where you will see it every day. Both personal and workplace e-mail systems usually include a calendar feature where you can record tasks, arrange to receive daily reminders, and check off completed tasks. Electronic devices such as smartphones have similar features.

Organize project documents in a binder or electronic folder, and label project documents and folders clearly. Use note cards or an electronic document to record bibliographical information for each source you plan to use in your paper. Tracking this information throughout the research process can save you hours of time when you create your references page.

Exercise 2

Revisit the schedule created in Exercise 1. Transfer it into a format that will help you stay on track from day to day. You may wish to input it into your smartphone, write it in a weekly planner, post it by your desk, or have you email account send you daily reminders. Consider setting up a buddy system with a classmate that will help you both stay on track.

Identify Challenges

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar? You have identified a book that would be a great resource for your project, but it is currently checked out of the library. You planned to interview a subject matter expert on your topic, but she calls to reschedule your meeting. You have begun writing your draft, but now you realize that you will need to modify your thesis and conduct additional research. Or you have finally completed your draft when your computer crashes, and days of hard work disappear in an instant.

These troubling situations are all too common. No matter how carefully you plan your schedule, you may encounter a glitch or setback. Managing your project effectively means anticipating potential problems, taking steps to minimize them where possible, and allowing time in your schedule to handle any setbacks.

Many times a situation becomes a problem due only to lack of planning. For example, if a book is checked out of your local library, it might be available through interlibrary loan, which usually takes a few days for the library staff to process. Alternatively, you might locate another, equally useful source. If you have allowed enough time for research, a brief delay will not become a major setback.

You can manage other potential problems by staying organized and maintaining a take-charge attitude. Take a minute each day to save a backup copy of your work on a portable hard drive. Maintain detailed note cards and source cards as you conduct research—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 for help, or make an appointment with a writing tutor.

Exercise 3

Identify five potential problems you might encounter in the process of researching and writing your paper. Write them on a separate sheet of paper. For each problem, write at least one strategy for solving the problem or minimizing its effect on your project.

Writing at Work

In the workplace, documents prepared at the beginning of a project often include a detailed plan for risk management. When you manage a project, it makes sense to anticipate and prepare for potential setbacks. For example, to roll out a new product line, a software development company must strive to complete tasks on a schedule in order to meet the new product release date. The project manager may need to adjust the project plan if one or more tasks fall behind schedule.

Conduct Research

When going about your research, you will likely use a variety of sources—anything from books and periodicals to video presentations and in-person interviews.Your sources will include both primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources provide firsthand information or raw data. For example, surveys, in-person interviews, and historical documents are primary sources. Secondary sources, such as biographies, literary reviews, or journal articles, include some analysis or interpretation of the information presented. As you conduct research, you will take detailed, careful notes about your discoveries. You will also evaluate the reliability of each source you find. See more about conducting research in "Evaluating and Working with Sources."

Using appropriate key words, start searching academic databases for scholarly articles about your topic. Try to look for sources from multiple perspectives, source types, and cultures. Print out or keep in a special electronic folder all of the articles you are considering.

Some Exercises or Tips to Follow while You Read

Read and annotate your articles, one at a time. At this time, also do the following for each of your readings:

- As themes or categories appear in what you are reading, assign a colored sticky note to each theme/category. As you read each article, use that color of sticky note to identify the theme wherever it appears in your reading. Note that each theme or category may not appear in all of your articles. However, each article may cover more than one theme. Annotate each article while you read with your thoughts, ideas, and reactions. Also annotate for understanding and main ideas.
- Begin your annotated bibliography if your instructor requires you to write one. Even if your instructor doesn't, creating an annotated bibliography can be a useful step for you to start to organize what you are reading in your mind. For each source, write down the complete MLA citation (in correct format), summarize the article in your own words, critique it (is the article good or not – why?), and explain how you could use it in your research paper. Writing an annotated bibliography takes time, but it is the first step in synthesizing and really thinking about how your sources work together.
- As you read through your articles, you may find that what you read raises more questions for you. This means you may go out and find some more articles, even some that weren't on your initial annotated bibliography. You may find that what you are reading doesn't seem relevant after all (although reading abstracts can help avoid this problem) so you may end up not including some articles you initially thought you would. Sometimes you may find that you need more information in some area or you may want to see if others agree with the original author. Or you may want to find out more about something the author wrote about. This is the time to check the list of citations at the end of the article. You can generally find more to read about the topic in that list although keep in mind those sources will be older than what you originally read.

Organize your Research and Ideas

When your research is complete, you will organize your findings and decide which sources to cite in your paper. You will also have an opportunity to evaluate the evidence you have collected and determine whether it helps to answer your research question. You may decide to conduct additional research to ensure that your question is answered thoroughly.

To help organize all of these ideas, begin a word processing document with a section for each theme/category you identified

while you were reading. In each theme/section, start writing down your significant annotations you wrote down while reading. Also, be sure to write down the last name of the author and page number of the source you are working with as you do this. Thinking about PIE paragraph development (see "Strategies for Paragraph Development"), you are beginning to write down some of the E(xplanation) and I(nformation) for your research paper.

Exercise 4 10.2.1

You may have created a mind map when brainstorming your research paper. If you did, return to that mind map and edit it by adding any new themes or topics you read about that you didn't think of before. Rearrange the mind map so that the connections represent how the topics relate to each other.

If you didn't create a mind map before -- and you are a visual thinker -- create one now. Write down each theme and think about how they relate to each other. Keep subtopic that relate close together on the mind map and keep those ideas that are less closely related farther apart. Then, you might write down the authors of each article underneath the topic(s)/theme(s) they discuss in their work. This way, each section of your research paper can be visually grouped before you write about one section (or mind map bubble) at a time. Topics/themes that are close together in your mind map can appear in close proximity in your paper also.

Draft Your Paper

Now that you've done some initial organizing, you are ready to combine your research findings with your critical analysis of the results in a rough draft. You will incorporate source materials into your paper and discuss each source thoughtfully in relation to your research question. See "Creating a Rough Draft of a Research Paper" to see an explanation of the form and structure of a literature review research paper.

When you cite your reference sources, it is important to both paraphrase well (see "Working with Sources Part 1") and pay close attention to standard conventions for citing sources in order to avoid plagiarism, or the practice of using someone else's words without acknowledging the source. You must cite your source even when you paraphrase. In fact, much higher level research writing in fields other than the humanities involves mostly paraphrasing, not incorporating quotations, so learning to paraphrase well is an invaluable skill that you should try to master. Later in this chapter, you will learn how to incorporate sources in your paper and avoid some of the most common pitfalls of attributing information.

Once you have finished your reading and note taking, go to your document in which you started to organize your notes. Go through each section, re-read your notes, and start coming up with some main ideas for each section and or paragraph that help lead to an answer to your research question. Then make sure each paragraph and section has a point, supporting information, and explanation/analysis (see PIE in "Strategies for Paragraph Development"). Try to work with one section at a time. You can develop your explanation by comparing different points of view on a subtopic (although x shows this, the results from x's study show this....), examining the nuances about a topic (i.e., this is similar, except...), discussing the implications of the ideas (looking at it from this perspective can mean...., this can help us by....), and/or critiquing the strength or weakness of some research over others (see sentence stems). Decide where you need more support and see if you can find it. But be sure to connect your research to an overall answer to your research question (what your thesis will eventually be). See what you can add to the analysis in each paragraph. At this point, you should have a general answer to your research question. This general answer is your thesis. Congratulations! You are now most of the way through your journey. See "Structure of the Research Paper" in "Creating a Rough Draft of a Research Paper" to see where to include your thesis.

Hint:

When you can't think of a word, think of the best word you can and then put question marks around it so you can revisit it later. Don't let not being able to think of the write word keep you form getting your other thoughts down.

Revise and Edit

Figure: by Pixabay on Pexels

Revising and polishing your paper is a multi-step process involving obtaining feedback and figuring out areas that might have holes or how to expand your explanation and possibly reorganizing some of your information. These are higher order concerns (HOCS), and they should be dealt with before you turn your attention to lower order concerns (LOCS) involving words choice, phrasing, checking your citations, and proofreading. When dealing with HOCS, you might reorganize your paper's structure or revise for unity and cohesion, ensuring that each element in your paper flows into the next logically and naturally. You will also make sure that your paper uses an appropriate and consistent tone. Pay special attention to this where you incorporate quotations and discuss other people's writing (see "Evaluating and Working with Sources," later in this chapter).

You may have already draft an introduction to get yourself writing, or you may have put that off. Either way, it's time to think about your research question and your audience. Think about what your audience will already know about your topic and provide context accordingly for your audience, in your thesis, ending at your research question. This may require to revise your introduction if you've already drafted one. Remember from the beginning of the chapter that research is a conversation, and since someone else reading your paper would feel like they would be entering a conversation without any context if you jump right into your topic, you need to provide the context for them to enter the conversation with you. That is the purpose of the introduction.

Once you feel confident in the strength of your writing, you will edit your paper for proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and formatting. If you used the question mark trick to mark places where you wanted to review your word choice, now is the time to go back and search for those question marks. Read your essay from the end to the beginning (looking for those question marks), or use the "search" or "find" key in your word processing program, and make any changes needed in word choice and sentence structure. Then proofread according to the tips in Section 7.5, "Proofreading." Do be careful to check all quotes against the original to make sure they are accurate (don't skip over them when proofreading), and make sure no citations are missing. Finally, make sure your final Works Cited page reflects the sources you actually used in your paper. If you got rid of some during the research process, remove them from the Works Cited list. Conversely, if you added some, add them to your Works Cited page. When you complete this final step -- hopefully not at 3 a.m. the morning before your paper is due -- you will have transformed a simple idea or question into a thoroughly researched and well-written paper you can be proud of!

Contributors

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10.3: Developing a Research Proposal

Developing a Research Proposal

Writing a good research paper takes time, thought, and effort. Although conducting and writing about research is challenging, it is manageable. Focusing on one step at a time will help you develop a thoughtful, informative, well-supported research paper. The steps to develop a good research proposal are to choose a topic; narrow it down to a specific aspect about the topic, to a "how" or "why" research question and any sub-questions; and to write a proposal that explains why you want to explore this question and how you intend to go about conducting your research to answer your research question. Think about a proposal as getting the "go-ahead" from your instructor to start your research. Your instructor wants to ensure that the task you set for yourself is manageable, and the proposal helps them determine that.

Writing at Work

Many occasions arise in the workplace to write a proposal. You may have a new idea for a process or to save money. You may think that your company should focus its marketing efforts on a new target market. You may own your own business and need to approach a bank for a loan. All of these situations require proposal writing. They may come in different forms and include different details from a research proposal, but the basic elements of explaining your idea in order to get permission to continue and obtain the resources you need remain. "Elevator pitches" (getting your idea across to your audience in the length of an elevator ride) are the most extreme, verbal version of a proposal.

Choosing a Topic

When you choose a topic for a research paper, you are making a major commitment. Your choice will help determine whether you enjoy the lengthy process of research and writing—and whether your final paper fulfills the assignment requirements. If you choose your topic hastily, you may later find it difficult to work with your topic. By taking your time and choosing carefully, you can ensure that this assignment is not only challenging but also rewarding.

Writers understand the importance of choosing a topic that fulfills the assignment requirements and fits the assignment's purpose and audience. Choosing a topic that interests you is also crucial. You instructor may provide a list of suggested topics or ask that you develop a topic on your own. In either case, try to identify topics that genuinely interest you. There may very well be more than one.

Figure: by Pixabay on Pexels

After identifying potential topic ideas, you will need to evaluate your ideas and choose one topic to pursue. Will you be able to find enough information about the topic? Can you develop a paper about this topic that presents and supports your original ideas? Is the topic too broad or too narrow for the scope of the assignment? If so, can you modify it so it is more manageable? You will ask these questions during this preliminary phase of the research process.

Identifying Potential Topics

Sometimes, your instructor may provide a list of suggested topics. If so, you may benefit from identifying several possibilities before committing to one idea. It is important to know how to narrow down your ideas into a concise, manageable question. You may also use the list as a starting point to help you identify additional, related topics. Discussing your ideas with your instructor or a tutor will help ensure that you choose a manageable topic that fits the requirements of the assignment.

Miguel was assigned to write a research paper on health and the media for an introductory course in health care. Although a general topic was selected for the students, Miguel had to decide which specific issues interested him. He brainstormed a list of possibilities.

Tip

If you are writing a research paper for a specialized course, look back through your notes and course activities. Identify reading assignments and class discussions that especially engaged you. Doing so can help you identify topics to pursue.

Possible Topics

1. Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) in the news
2. Sexual education programs
3. Hollywood and eating disorders
4. Americans' access to public health information
5. Media portrayal of health care reform bill
6. Depictions of drugs on television
7. The effect of the Internet on mental health
8. Popularized diets (such as low-carbohydrate diets)
9. Fear of pandemics (bird flu, HINI, SARS)
10. Electronic entertainment and obesity
11. Advertisements for prescription drugs
12. Public education and disease prevention

Exercise 1

Exercise 1

Set a time for five minutes. Use brainstorming (listing) or idea mapping (bubbled, interconnecting topics) to create a list of topics you would be interested in researching for a paper about the influence of the Internet on social networking. Do you closely follow the media coverage of a particular website, such as Twitter? Would you like ot learn more about a certain industry such as online dating? Are you interested in how social networking can influence politics or marketing? Which social networking sites to you and your friends use? List as many ideas related to this topic as you can.

Exercise 2

Answer the following questions to help you figure out and narrow down your topic, especially if your instructor has not provided you with a list of topics.

1. What topics relate to what you've studied this semester? If you are a visual learner/thinker, try doing this in mind map form.2.

2. What are the different academic domains that are related to this topic (for example, history, economics, business, sociology, biology, health, philosophy, the environment/ecology)?

3. What do you wonder about in relation to this topic?

4. How does what you wonder about relate to business and society?

5. Based on the above, write down three potential research questions. Each question should begin with the word "why" or "how."

Example of a Topic Exploration Mind Map

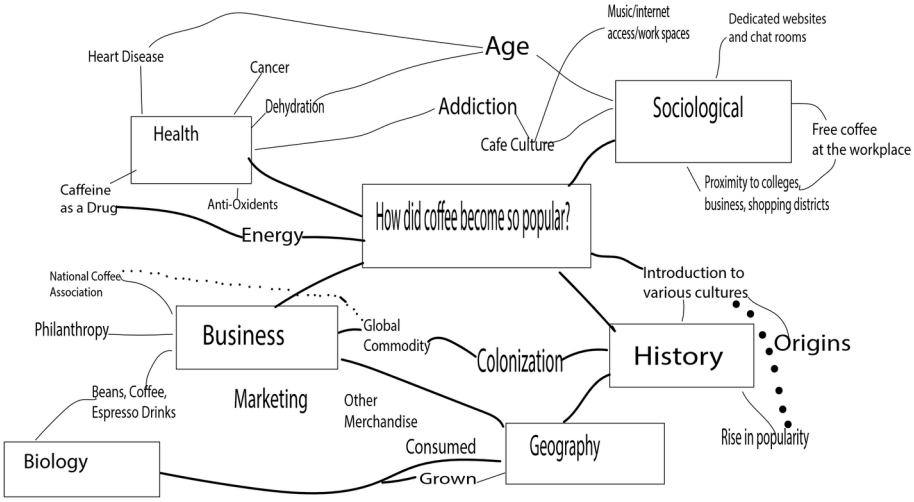


Figure: created by authors.

Narrowing Your Topic

Once you have a list of potential topics, you will need to choose one as the focus of your essay. You will also need to narrow your topic. 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 Keto diet, are specific enough to write about without being too narrow to 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. Narrowing your focus is essential to making your topic manageable. To narrow your focus, explore your topic in writing, conduct preliminary research, and discuss both the topic and the research with others.

Exploring Your Topic in Writing

"How am I supposed to narrow my topic when I haven't even begun researching yet?" In fact, you may already know more than you realize. Review your list and identify your top two or three topics. Set aside some time to explore each one through freewriting and/or the KWL+ activity below. Simply taking the time to focus on your topic may yield fresh angles.

Exercise 3

Free write one-half to one page about what you know about the topic, as well as what you would like to know. Remember that free writes don't need to be organized or take any particular form. It is just a matter of putting some thoughts on paper.

Miguel knew that he was especially interested in the topic of diet fads, but he also knew that it was much too broad for his assignment. He used free writing to explore his thoughts so he could narrow his topic. Here are his ideas.

> Our instructors are always saying that accurate, up-to-date information is crucial in encouraging people to make better choices about their health. I don't think the media does a very good job of providing that, though. Every time I go on the Internet, I see tons of ads for the latest "miracle food." One week it's acai berries, the next week it's green tea, and then six months later I see a news story saying all the fabulous claims about acai berries and green tea are overblown! Advice about weight loss is even worse. Think about all the diet books that are out there! Some say that a low-fat diet is best; some say you should cut down on carbs; and some make bizarre recommendations like eating half a grapefruit with every meal. I don't know how anyone is supposed to make an informed decision about what to eat when there's so much confusing, contradictory information. I bet even doctors, nurses, and dieticians have trouble figuring out what information is reliable and what is just the latest hype.

Exercise 4

*Complete the **K** and **W** portions of the following "KWL+ Chart" for your topic. In a "KWL+ Chart," **K** stands for what you already **K**now about the topic. **W** stands for what you **W**ant to know; **L** stands for what you **L**earned (having gone through the research project or having read a particular paper). "**+**" stands for what you **still** want to know after having finished reading a particular paper or having finished your project.*Add exercises text here

KWL+ Chart			
K What I **K**now about my topic	**W** What I **W**ant to learn about my topic	**L** What I **L**earned about my topic	**+** What I **still (+)** want to know about my topic

Conducting Preliminary Research

Another way writers may focus a topic is to conduct preliminary research. Like free writing, exploratory reading can help you identify interesting angles. Surfing the web and browsing through newspaper and magazine articles are good ways to start. Find out what people are saying about your topic on blogs and online discussion groups. Discussing your topic with others can also inspire you. Talk about your ideas with your classmates, your friends, or your instructor.

Miguel's free writing exercise helped him realize that the assigned topic of health and the media intersected with a few of his interests—diet, nutrition, and obesity. Preliminary online research and discussions with his classmates strengthened his impression that many people are confused or misled by media coverage of these subjects.

Miguel decided to focus his paper on a topic that had garnered a great deal of media attention—low-carbohydrate diets. He wanted to find out whether low-carbohydrate diets were as effective as their proponents claimed.

Writing at Work

At work, you may need to research a topic quickly to find general information. This information can be useful in understanding trends in a given industry or generating competition. For example, a company may research a competitor's prices and use the information when pricing their own product. You may find it useful to skim a variety of reliable sources and take notes on your findings.

Exercise 5

Use the information from the "W" column in your KWL+ chart, as well as your free write, to guide you to read some initial research (maybe a couple of articles) about your topic. Identify some common or contrasting themes or issues in what you read.

Tip

The reliability of online sources varies greatly. In this exploratory research, you do not need to evaluate sources as closely as you will later. However, use common sense as you refine your paper topic. If you read a fascinating blog comment that gives you a new idea for your paper, be sure to check out other, more reliable sources as well to make sure the ideas is worth pursuing.

Formulating a Research Question

In forming a research question, you are setting a goal for your research. 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.

To determine your research question, review the free writing and KWL+ exercises you completed earlier. Skim through books, articles, and websites and list the questions you have. (You may wish to use the 5WH strategy to help you formulate questions. See Chapter 4.6, "Prewriting Strategies" for more information about 5WH questions.) Include simple, factual questions and more complex questions that would require analysis and interpretation. Determine your main question—the primary focus of your paper—and several sub-questions that you will need to research to answer your main question.

Here are the research questions Miguel will use to focus his research. Notice that his main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. Miguel will need to research his sub-questions, which address narrower topics, to answer his main question.

Topic: Main question: Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources? (Note that this research question will work even though it can be answered with a "yes" or "no" because it combines two different topics and requires evaluation, so it cannot simply be answered with a fact. Research questions that can be answered with a fact are not true research questions.

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-carb 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?

Tip:

Notice that Miguel's sub-questions begin with the journalism questions of "who," "what," "when," "where," "why," and "how." While "why" and "how" are good words with which to begin your main research question, writers can use the more fact-based, journalism question words to ask sub-questions to help develop their research and find background information that your reader may need for context.

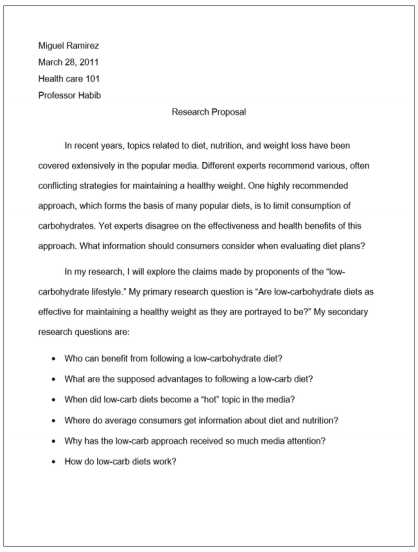
Exercise 6

Write your main research question (that begins with "why" or "how") and at least four to five sub-questions. If you created a mind map, you may want to base some of your questions on the intersection of different bubbles in your mind map.

Creating a Research Proposal

A research proposal is a brief document—no more than one typed page—that proposes the research you would like to do, isummarizes the preliminary work you have completed, includes your proposed research question, and explains how you will go about conducting your research. This last part is especially important if you want to do any primary research, such as surveys or interviews. Your purpose in writing it is to formalize your plan for research and present it to your instructor for feedback. You will also briefly discuss the value of researching this topic.

When Miguel began drafting his research proposal, he realized that he had already created most of the pieces he needed. However, he knew he also had to explain how his research would be relevant to other future health care professionals. In addition, he wanted to form a general plan for doing the research and identifying potentially useful sources. Read Miguel's research proposal.



Miguel Ramirez
March 28, 2011
Health care 101
Professor Habib

Research Proposal

In recent years, topics related to diet, nutrition, and weight loss have been covered extensively in the popular media. Different experts recommend various, often conflicting strategies for maintaining a healthy weight. One highly recommended approach, which forms the basis of many popular diets, is to limit consumption of carbohydrates. Yet experts disagree on the effectiveness and health benefits of this approach. What information should consumers consider when evaluating diet plans?

In my research, I will explore the claims made by proponents of the "low-carbohydrate lifestyle." My primary research question is "Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective for maintaining a healthy weight as they are portrayed to be?" My secondary research questions are:

- Who can benefit from following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carb diet?
- When did low-carb 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?

For this assignment, I will review general interest and scholarly articles that discuss the relationship between low-carbohydrate diets, weight loss, and long-term health outcomes.

Figure:

Use this example to write your own research proposal. If you choose to be more specific about where you will look for your sources, and if you will do any primary research, indicate that in your proposal as well.

Writing at Work

Before you begin a new project at work, you may have to develop a project summary document that states the purpose of the project, explains why it would be a wise use of company resources, and briefly outlines the steps involved in completing the project. If it involves spending money to save money, you will also want to include a proposed cost/benefit analysis in table form. This type of document is similar to a research proposal. Both documents define and limit a project, explain its value, discuss how to proceed, and identify what resources you will use.

Contributors

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10.4: Strategies for Gathering Information

Now that you have planned your research project, you are ready to begin the research. This phase can be both exciting and challenging. As you read this section, you will learn ways to locate sources efficiently, so you have enough time to read the sources, take notes, and think about how to use the information.

Of course, the technological advances of the past few decades—particularly the rise of online media—mean that, as a twenty-first-century student, you have countless sources of information available at your fingertips. But how can you tell whether a source is reliable? This section will discuss strategies for evaluating sources critically so that you can be a media-savvy researcher.

In this section, you will locate and evaluate resources for your paper and begin taking notes. As you read, begin gathering print and electronic resources, identify at least eight to ten sources by the time you finish the chapter, and begin taking notes on your research findings.

Locating Useful Resources

When you chose a paper topic and determined your research questions, you conducted preliminary research to stimulate your thinking. Your research proposal included some general ideas for how to go about your research—for instance, interviewing an expert in the field or analyzing the content of popular magazines. You may even have identified a few potential sources. Now it is time to conduct a more focused, systematic search for informative primary and secondary sources.

Using Primary and Secondary Sources

Knowing the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources is very important in terms of knowing how to evaluate and use sources for research papers.

Primary Sources

Figure: by RedRecords on Pexels

Primary sources are sources that are first hand. In other words, you are working with the actual data. They include:

- Data (from data gathering websites, such as the Census Bureau),
- Interviews,
- Diaries and letters, and
- Other historical documents

- Websites of government agencies and organizations that collect 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. You may collect primary sources yourself, or a primary source may be the actual “data” that other people have collected. The difference between a primary and a secondary source is that -- with a primary source -- you are working with information that no one else has interpreted for you. You do that initial work yourself. You also have the chance to evaluate the quality of the data and determine if it is of high enough quality to work with. If you determine that is, primary sources are the best, most credible source to work with provided there were no problems with the way the data collection was set up (i.e., biased surveys, inconsistent collection, too small of a sample).

Secondary Sources

Figure: by Rishabh Sharma on Unsplash.

Secondary sources are those in which the data/information has been interpreted and edited once. Typical examples include research papers, research-based books, and some newspaper articles (those that are only dealing with primary sources, such as interviews). Secondary sources are the foundation for academic research because the whole point of research is to grow knowledge. We grow knowledge by building on other people’s work most of the time. This is part of the reason we cite – because we are acknowledging whose work we are building upon. Most research papers are a combination of primary and secondary sources. Often, a writer must set up a background based on their own and others’ previous work to justify their current work both theoretically and in terms of their methods (how they are going to conduct their own research). Secondary sources are reliable to the extent that:

- The interpretations the writers make are logically sound,
- The authors do not have any conflicts of interest (i.e., a study about the health benefits of wine paid for by the wine industry), and
- The data are statistically and/or historically valid and collected in an appropriate manner.

Secondary sources discuss, interpret, analyze, consolidate, or otherwise rework information from primary sources. For example, in researching for 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:

- Journal and some magazine articles
- Some newspaper articles
- Biographical books
- Television documentaries
- Websites that at interpret data gathered by themselves or others (for example, the USGS website's articles about why

earthquakes happen).

It's not always possible to determine if a secondary source is completely credible given that we don't usually have access to the initial data, but we should always ask certain questions about our secondary sources to make sure they are as credible as possible (see below).

One very famous example of a non-credible secondary source was a paper, published in a very credible scientific journal, that linked autism to some of the ingredients in childhood vaccines. The result of this seemingly credible study was that many parents stopped vaccinating their children out of fear of autism. The result on society was an increase in childhood diseases, such as measles and whooping cough, that had almost been wiped out in the U.S. and elsewhere. Other scientists tried to replicate the results of the study, but they could not (validating results is also part of academic, especially scientific, inquiry). This failure to replicate the results called into question the validity of the original study. The original author and the journal recanted the study, so this relationship between vaccines and autism has now been debunked.

Tertiary Sources

Tertiary sources are those sources that have already been interpreted by two people. These sources are not nearly as reliable as primary and secondary sources because it is nearly impossible for a reader/listener to determine if the interpretation others have made is logical and accurate/appropriate. Common examples of tertiary sources are magazine articles in which an author uses a number of secondary sources or, lately, newspaper articles that cite other newspaper articles rather than an original source. Blogs are another common tertiary source, and they are rarely credible enough to include as a source for academic writing. (However, some academic researchers do have their own blogs, and if their work is generally considered credible, so are their blogs). Tertiary sources are like rumors – you have to take them with "a grain of salt." Many times, tertiary sources will also be filled with emotive language to get you to feel a certain way about the topic. This is a clue that your source may not be credible enough.

What Kind of Sources Should I Use?

Your topic and purpose determine whether you must use both primary and secondary sources in your paper. Ask yourself which sources are most likely to provide the information that will answer your research questions. If you are writing a research paper about reality television shows, you will need to use some reality shows as a primary source, but secondary sources, such as a reviewer's critique, are also important. If you are writing about the health effects of nicotine, you will probably want to read the published results of scientific studies, but secondary sources, such as magazine articles discussing the outcome of a recent study, may also be helpful.

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 print and electronic resources. The challenge here is to conduct your search efficiently. Writers use strategies to help them find the sources that are most relevant and reliable while steering clear of sources that will not be useful.

Print Resources versus Electronic Resources

These days, there really isn't much difference in how you find your resources, whether they are print or electronic. Either way, you will likely search for them digitally. The only difference is whether you read the read or watch the resource online or hold it and read a print version. Keep in mind, however, that some potentially useful sources may be available only in print form. Others may be only available electronically. The following table lists different types of resources available at public, college, and university libraries.

Table 10.4.1: Library Resources

Resource Type	Description	Example(s)
Reference works	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 some cases, reference books may not be checked out of a library; rather, they must be read there. **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.**	• *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2010* • *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* published by the American Psychiatric Association
Nonfiction books	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.	• *The Low-Carb Solution: A Slimmer You in 30 Days* • *Carbohydrates, Fats and Proteins: Exploring the Relationship Between Macronutrient Ratios and Health Outcomes*
Periodicals and news sources	These sources are published at regular intervals—daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Newspapers, magazines, and academic journals are examples. Some periodicals provide articles on subjects of general interest while others are more specialized.	• *New York Times* • *PC Magazine* • *JAMA, The Journal of the American Medical Association*
Government publications	Federal, state, and local government agencies publish information on a variety of topics. Government publications include reports, legislation, court documents, public records, statistics, studies, guides, programs, and forms.	• The *Census 2000 Profile* • *The Business Relocation Package* published by the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce
Business and nonprofit publications	Businesses and nonprofit organizations produce publications designed to market a product, provide background about the organization, provide information on topics connected to the organization, or promote a cause. Occasionally they also collect statistics. These publications include reports, newsletters, advertisements, manuals, brochures, and other print documents.	• A company's instruction manual explaining how to use a specific software program • A news release published by the Sierra Club

Resource Type	Description	Example(s)
Historical documents	Some libraries, particularly university libraries, hold special collection related to a particular historical event, a particular historical or literary figure, and other special topics.	• John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum • The Archer Collection of Historical Childrens' Books at J. Paul Leonard Library, San Francisco State University

Many of these resources are also widely available in electronic format. In addition to the resources noted in the table, library holdings -- especially university libraries -- may include primary texts such as historical documents, letters, and diaries.

Writing at Work

Businesses, government organizations, and nonprofit organizations produce published materials that range from brief advertisements and brochures to lengthy, detailed reports. In many cases, producing these publications requires research. A corporation's annual report may include research about economic or industry trends. A charitable organization may use information from research in materials sent to potential donors.

Regardless of the industry you work in, you may be asked to assist in developing materials for publication. Often, incorporating research in these documents can make them more effective in informing or persuading readers

Tip

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. On the other hand, restricting oneself to dense, scholarly works could make the process of researching extremely time-consuming and frustrating.

Using Periodicals, Indexes, and Databases

These days, library catalogs are almost exclusively online and integrate many sub-databases, so you can generally go to one place to locate book-length sources, magazine and journal articles, CDs, DVDs, and audio books. Generally speaking, though, they don't search the Internet, so you would need to conduct a separate search for primary sources you might want from the Internet. You can generally also find secondary sources that appear on the Internet in your library database. Always search here first, especially for journal articles, because you don't have to pay for these resources if you access them through your library whereas Google Scholar may charge more than $25.00 to access one article. To locate shorter sources, such as magazine and journal articles, you will need to use a periodical index or an online periodical database. These tools index the articles that appear in newspapers, magazines, and journals. Like catalogs, they provide publication information about an article and often allow users to access a summary or even the full text of the article.

Sometimes your library database may re-direct you to the sub-database that you may need to search again to find the actual article you want. This is especially true for specialty topics. It's a good idea to copy the exact title of the article so you can paste the title into the search bar of any sub-database that you may need to access.

The table, "Commonly Used Indexes and Databases," describes some commonly used indexes and databases to which your library's database may link.

Table 10.4.2 - Commonly Used Indexes and Databases

Resource	Format	Contents
Business Source Complete	Online	Database that archives business-related content from magazines and journals
EBSCOhost	Online	General database that provides access to articles on a wide variety of topics
MEDLINE, PubMed	Online	Databases that archive articles in medicine and health
New York Times Index	Online	Guide to articles published in the *New York Times*
ProQuest	Online	Database that archives content from newspapers, magazines, and dissertations
Psychlit, PsycINFO	Online	Databases that archive content from journals in psychology and psychiatry

Using Internet Search Engines Efficiently

When faced with the challenge of writing a research paper, some students rely on popular search engines as their first 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? Unfortunately, despite its apparent convenience, this research strategy has the following drawbacks to consider:

- **Results do not always appear in order of reliability.** The first few hits that appear in search results may include sites whose content is not always reliable, such as online encyclopedias that can be edited by any user. Because websites are created by third parties, the search engine cannot tell you which sites have accurate information.
- **Results may be too numerous for you to use.** The amount of information available on the web is far greater than the amount of information housed within a particular library or database. Realistically, if your web search pulls up thousands of hits, you will not be able to visit every site—and the most useful sites may be buried deep within your search results.

A general web search can provide a helpful overview of a topic and may pull up genuinely useful resources. To get the most out of a search engine, however, use strategies to make your search more efficient. Use multiple keywords and Boolean operators to limit your results. Click on the Advanced Search link on the homepage to find additional options for streamlining your search. 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 country.
- Limit results to scholarly works available online.
- Limit results by file type.
- Limit results to a particular domain type, such as .edu (school and university sites) or .gov (government sites). This is a quick way to filter out commercial sites, which can often lead to more objective results.

Use the Bookmarks or Favorites feature of your web browser to save and organize sites that look promising. If you end up find an article and the search engine tries to charge you to access it, try searching for the article in your college or local public library, where you can probably access it for free.

Choosing Key Words

Even if you use print sources, most likely you will need to use an electronic library database to find where they are. To use a library database well, you want to be able to use "key words" that will lead you to the most relevant resources. To find print resources efficiently, first identify the major concepts and terms you will use to conduct your search—that is, your "key words." These, along with the research questions you identified, will help you find sources using any of the following methods:

- Using the library's online catalog or card catalog
- Using periodicals indexes and databases
- Consulting a reference librarian

You probably already have some keywords in mind based on your preliminary research and writing. Another way to identify useful keywords is to visit the Library of Congress's website at http://id.loc.gov/authorities. This site allows you to search for a topic and see the related subject headings used by the Library of Congress, including broader terms, narrower terms, and related terms. Other libraries use these terms to classify materials. Knowing the most-used terms will help you speed up your keyword search.

Here are some additional tips for working with "key words."

- Start off with key words that are fairly specific. For instance, rather than “global warming,” you might use “temperature trends” or “sea level rise.”
- Check your spelling.
- If you don’t get enough results from your key word search, broaden or generalize your key words.
- You also might be limiting your results too much with specific word suffixes. Try using an asterisk to tell the computer to search the root word with all the endings. For instance warm* would find any article with “warmer” “warming” and “warm.”
- If you get too many results from your search, try to be more specific about what you are searching for. Be more specific in the exact words you use.
- Try limiting the time period of the articles in your results list. Your instructor may advise that you should only use secondary sources that are less than ten years old, depending on your topic.
- Include more specific fields such as “author” or “title” rather than any part of the text.
- Use correct Boolean search terminology, such as “sea level rise” AND “Borneo,” so that the results are only for sea level rise in Borneo and not elsewhere.
- Combine keywords with **AND** or **+** to limit results to citations that include both keywords—for example, **diet + nutrition**.
- Combine keywords with **NOT** or **–** to search for the first word without the second. This can help you eliminate irrelevant results based on words that are similar to your search term. For example, searching for **obesity NOT childhood** locates materials on obesity but excludes materials on childhood obesity.
- Enclose a phrase in quotation marks to search for an exact phrase, such as “**morbid obesity**.”
- Use parentheses to direct the order of operations in a search string. For example, since Type II diabetes is also known as adult-onset diabetes, you could search **(Type II OR adult-onset) AND diabetes** to limit your search results to articles on this form of the disease.
- Think of synonyms for your key words and try searching for those.
- You might also break up your topic into more specific concepts and search using key words for those more specific concepts.

Exercise 1

Make a list of five types of print resources you could use to find information about your research topic. Include at least one primary source. Be as specific as possible—if you have a particular resource or type of resource in mind, describe it. Miguel used the Library of Congress site to identify general terms he could use to find resources about low-carb dieting. His search helped him identify potentially useful keywords and related topics, such as carbohydrates in human nutrition, glycemic index, and carbohydrates—metabolism. These terms helped Jorge refine his search

Tip

If you are still having trouble finding relevant sources after trying the above tips, consult a librarian to see whether you need to modify your search terms. They are happy to help you.

Exercise 2

Visit the Library of Congress’s website at http://id.loc.gov/authorities and conduct searches on a few terms related to your topic.

1. Review your search results and identify six to eight additional terms you might use when you conduct your research.
2. Print out the search results or save the results to your research folder on your computer or portable storage device.

Consulting a Reference Librarian

Sifting through library stacks and database search results to find the information you need can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. If you are not sure how you should begin your search, or if it is yielding too many or too few results, you are not alone. Many students find this process challenging although it does get easier with experience. One way to learn better search strategies is to consult a reference librarian.

Reference librarians are intimately familiar with the systems libraries use to organize and classify information. They can help you locate a particular book in the library stacks, steer you toward useful reference works, and provide tips on how to use databases and other electronic research tools. Take the time to see what resources you can find on your own, but if you encounter difficulties, ask for help. Many university librarians hold virtual office hours and are available for online chatting.

Exercise 3

Visit your library's website or consult with a reference librarian to determine what periodicals indexes or databases would be useful for your research. Depending on your topic, you may rely on a general news index, a specialized index for a particular subject area, or both. Search the catalog for your topic and related keywords. Print out or bookmark your search results.

1. Identify at least one to two relevant periodicals, indexes, or databases.
2. Conduct a keyword search to find potentially relevant articles on your topic.
3. Save your search results. If the index you are using provides article summaries or abstracts, read these to determine how useful the articles are likely to be.
4. Identify at least three to five articles to review more closely. If the full article is available online, set aside time to read it. If not, plan to visit our library within the next few days to locate the articles you need.

Determining Whether a Source Is Relevant

Sometimes an article's title may seem like it could be right for your purposes, but you aren't sure. The quickest way to decide whether you should continue to consider it (especially if it is a journal or indexed article) is to read the abstract. The abstract is a summary of the article, and it will give you a better idea of what the article is about. Do this while you are searching to avoid spending time downloading articles needlessly.

Still, at this point in your research process, you may have identified dozens of potential sources. It is easy for writers to get so caught up in checking out books and printing out/bookmarking articles that they forget to ask themselves how they will use these resources in their research. Now is a good time to get a little ruthless. Reading and taking notes takes time and energy, so you will want to focus on the most relevant sources.

To weed through your stack of books and articles, skim their contents. Read quickly with your research questions and subtopics in mind. The table, "Tips for Skimming Books and Articles" explains 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.

Table 10.4.3 -- Tips for Skimming Books and Articles

Tips for Skimming Books	Tips for Skimming Articles
1. Read the dust jacket 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.	1. Skim the introduction and conclusion for summary material. 2. Skim through subheadings and text features such as sidebars. 3. Look for keywords related to your topic. 4. Journal articles often begin with an abstract or summary of the contents. Read it to determine the article's relevance to your research.

Other Information Sources

Interviews

With so many print and electronic media readily available, it is easy to overlook another valuable information resource: other people. Consider whether you could use a person or group as a primary source. For instance, you might interview a professor who has expertise in a particular subject, a worker within a particular industry, or a representative from a political organization. Interviews can be a great way to get firsthand information.

To get the most out of an interview, you will need to plan ahead. Contact your subject early in the research process and explain your purpose for requesting an interview. Prepare detailed, open-ended questions. Open-ended questions, rather than questions with simple yes-or-no answers, are more likely to lead to an in-depth discussion. Schedule a time to meet, and be sure to obtain your subject's permission to record the interview. Take careful notes and be ready to ask follow-up questions based on what you learn. Also ask the person you are interviewing if you may use their name in your paper (if you end up quoting them) or if they would prefer to be cited anonymously ("Reading and Note taking for Research Papers" later in this chapter).

Tip

If scheduling an in-person meeting is difficult, consider arranging a telephone or video phone call interview or asking your subject to respond to your questions via e-mail. Recognize that any of these formats takes time and effort. Be prompt and courteous, avoid going over the allotted interview time, and be flexible if your subject needs to reschedule. Always send a thank you note or email when your interview is complete.

Writing at Work

Informational interviews are a useful way to find out about an industry, figure out whether you may enjoy a particular line of work, and make contacts. It is primary research for your own career. Informational interviews can be used at any point in your career, whether you are just starting out or you are thinking about your next move. Prepare for an informational interview just as you would if you were writing a research paper. Have some background information about the industry, company, and person. Form some detailed open-ended questions. In this case, you may not want to record the interview, but just take notes on a pad of paper. Keep the interview at no more than one-half hour, and be sure to send a thank you note or email within a day of the interview.

Using Media as a Primary Source

Depending on your research question, you may want to use various media as a primary source. Social networking sites (ensure the posts are public), online chat rooms and discussion forums, videos of newscasts, blogs (web logs), vlogs (video logs), and videos on YouTube may all be primary sources of information if your research goal is to analyze a topic and how it is portrayed in the media. Be very careful to gather electronic sources that show a variety of viewpoints because it can be difficult to avoid confirmation bias (choosing support that reflects your own viewpoints) when choosing among electronic sources. Remember, also, that each primary source is one data point, and you cannot generalize (extrapolate) from just one data point. To be able to make a generalization from primary electronic data, you would need to ensure you have a large enough sample size to say something is correlated. In most cases, you won't have enough data to generalize, so you can simply bring in your observations as an additional source of information that supports other work that has already been able to make a general point about your topic.

Contributors and Attributions

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10.5: Evaluating and Working with Sources

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Assessing and Evaluating Sources

Critical thinking is interwoven in all steps of the research process, and one of the places you will definitely use it is when you evaluate your sources. As you researched your sources, you may have developed a good sense of which sources are going to be the most useful in supporting your research question. However, the credibility of your research paper relates directly to your sources. Are your sources themselves valid? You need to consciously evaluate your sources in order to make final choices about using them in your research essay.

The two main questions you should ask yourself when evaluating sources are the following:

1. Is this source suitable?
2. Is this source trustworthy?

Not every suitable source is trustworthy, and not every trustworthy source is suitable. In Miguel's example that follows, you'll see that the writing professor encourages Miguel to *talk* to the right sources as part of the conversation on his topic. To do this, he needs to find authors who are trustworthy *and* knowledgeable.

Miguel: If I used a university or government website on bottled water quality, would readers trust me more than if I just used a bottled water company website?

Prof: Yes. Refresh my memory. What kinds of questions do you need answers to before you can write your paper?

Miguel: Well, I need to know if bottled water is truly healthier, like the beverage companies claim. Or would I be just as well off drinking tap water?

Prof: To answer this question, you'll want to find out who's *talking* about these issues in the overall conversation (or *discourse*) about bottled water. The authors of texts aren't speaking aloud, of course, but they're making written statements that others can "listen" and "respond" to. Knowing which texts you can trust means understanding which authors you can trust.

Miguel: How do I figure that out?

Prof: It helps to know who the authors are. What they're saying. Where, when, and to whom they're saying it. To go into more depth into questions about suitability and trustworthiness of sources, consider the following.

Determining Suitability

Your task as a researcher is to determine the appropriateness of the information your source contains for your particular research project. Ask this simple question: Will this source help me answer my research questions? Will it help me learn as much as I can about my topic? Will it help me write an interesting, convincing essay for my readers?

Suitable sources:

- Contain facts/opinions that help answer your research question,
- May contain illustrations or data that help answer your research question,
- Clearly explain their information,
- Are/were written by a well known authority or expert, and
- Carefully cite the sources they used.

Unsuitable sources:

- May not offer any relevant, important information or counter-argument,
- May not contain any new information that advances your understanding of your topic,
- May be too narrow or too broad in coverage of your topic,
- May be from very general sources and not from a scholarly journal or peer-reviewed source,
- May be from a scholarly journal but be too technical or difficult for you to understand,
- May be out of date, or
- Do not cite the sources they used.

Determining Trustworthiness

To determine the trustworthiness and credibility of a source, you want to ensure that a source is current, written by an expert, accurate, and unbiased. You'll want to consider the rhetorical context of a source, including its purpose, audience, and focus.

View the following video, which clearly identifies a variety of questions to ask in order to 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

Video 10.5.1

Evaluating Sources to Find Quality Research. **Authored by:** PCC Library. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Evaluating the credibility and validity of a resource can be very difficult, particularly when doing research using the Internet. Below are some basic guidelines to help you select reliable resources and use those to glean, or find, accurate information about a given subject.

Characteristics of Reliable Sources

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, however, 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.

> As Miguel conducted his research, he read several research studies in which scientists found significant benefits to following a low-carbohydrate diet. He also noticed that many studies were sponsored by a foundation associated with the author of a popular series of low-carbohydrate diet books. Miguel read these studies with a critical eye, knowing that a hidden agenda might be shaping the researchers' conclusions.

When using websites for research, check to see when the site was last updated. Many sites publish this information on the homepage, and some, such as news sites, are updated daily or weekly. Many nonfunctioning links are a sign that a website is not regularly updated. Do not be afraid to ask your professor for suggestions if you find that many of your most relevant sources are not especially reliable—or that the most reliable sources are not relevant. If you are finding your sources on the internet, is also important to think about who is sponsoring the information. The URL can provide information about the origin of the resource. The following are examples of ways you can determine the type of organization that is sponsoring the content for a specific website.

Sites ending in....
.edu are usually educational institutions and generally a good source of information.
.gov are government websites and usually good sources for statistical information
.org are typically non-profit organizations often set up as a public service. Be on the lookout for political agendas and biases.

Example: If you are looking for information about gun control, then you might check .gov sites for statistics related to gun ownership, laws, etc. Sites affiliated with specific biases on gun ownership will probably be listed on .org sites (handguncontrol.org or nrahg.org).

Blogs
While interesting, these are usually not fact-based and as a general rule should not be used for conducting research.

Online magazines or journals
These articles often contain a detailed bibliography and site specific resources as evidence for claims and statistics.

Online news sources
Virtually every network and cable news station has an online site as do local affiliates. It is important to realize that while they do provide news, they are also involved in the entertainment industry and may present some information that is based in opinion and not necessarily facts.

Television/Internet video news broadcasts
When viewing video, keep in mind that if it is not from a source that can be accurately documented with origin, date, and key information like who, what, when, where, why and how, then the source may not be credible.

Source Rankings	
High Quality Sources These sources provide the most in-depth information. They are researched and written by subject matter experts and are carefully reviewed.	• Scholarly books and articles in scholarly journals • Trade books and magazines geared toward an educated general audience, such as *Smithsonian Magazine* or *Nature* • Government documents, such as books, reports, and web pages • Documents posted online by reputable organizations, such as universities and research institutes • Textbooks and reference books, which are usually reliable but may not cover a topic in great depth
Varied-Quality Sources These 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. Use them with caution.	• News stories and feature articles (print or online) from reputable newspapers, magazines, or organizations, such as *Newsweek* or the Public Broadcasting Service • Popular magazine articles, which may or may not be carefully researched and fact checked • Documents published by businesses and nonprofit organizations
Questionable Sources These sources should be avoided. They are often written primarily to attract a large readership or present the author's opinions and are not subject to careful review.	• Loosely regulated or unregulated media content, such as Internet discussion boards, blogs, free online encyclopedias, talk radio shows, television news shows with obvious political biases, personal websites, and chat rooms

Free online encyclopedias and wikis may seem like a great source of information. They usually appear among the first few results of a web search. They cover thousands of topics, and many articles use an informal, straightforward writing style. Unfortunately, these sites have no control system for researching, writing, and reviewing articles. Instead, they rely on a community of users to police themselves. At best, these sites can be a starting point for finding other, more trustworthy sources. Never use them as final sources.

Questions to ask yourself when determining the credibility of an academic paper/study are:

- Who funded the study?
- Are there any professional links between the author and the funder?
- Do the authors explain where the data comes from and how they obtained it?
- Who are the authors? Are they experts in their fields (i.e., what is their authority?) 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 physics, but this credential is not a valid qualification for writing about psychology. Check credentials carefully.
- What does the author's purpose seem to be?
- How recent is the source?
- Does the writing have a lot of emotionally laden words (i.e., is it not objective)?
- Does the author cite their own sources?

Exercise 1

Choose one of your articles you've gathered for your research paper. Answer the following questions, and then write a summary explaining whether and why you believe the source is credible enough to act as one of your sources.

1. Who funded the study/article?

2. Who owns the publication? Do they have a commercial or political purpose?

3. Are there any professional links between the author and the funder?

4. Do the authors explain where the data comes from and how they obtained it?

5. Who are the authors? Are they experts in their fields?

6. What does the author's seem to be?

7. How recent is the source?

8. Does the writing have a lot of emotionally laden words, indicating it may not be objective?

9. Do the authors cite their sources

Avoiding Conspiracy Theories and Fake News

Avoiding conspiracy theories and fake news is essential for conducting credible research. The following guides have helpful resources to help you determine whether a news story you are considering is legitimate or not. The second source allows you to search and find out if a conspiracy theory or urban legend is true or not.

How to Spot Fake News (Harvard University Library)

www.snopes.com

Strategy: The CRAAP Test

One excellent tool to examine both the suitability and trustworthiness of a source is the CRAAP method, which stands for:

- **C**urrency: the timeliness of the information
- **R**elevance: the importance of the information for your needs
- **A**uthority: the source of the information
- **A**ccuracy: the reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the information
- **P**urpose: the reason the information exists

The following video offers a good explanation of these points of analysis.

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

Video 10.5.1

Study Help: Evaluating Information.Authored by: University of South Australia. License: All Rights Reserved. License Terms: Standard YouTube license.

Currency: The Timeliness of the Information

Key Question: When was the item of information published or produced?

Determining when an item of information was published or produced is an aspect of evaluating information. The date the information was published or produced tells you how current it is or how relevant it is to the topic you are researching. For example, if you were writing a research paper on the survival of passengers in car crashes, you would need the most recent information on automobile crash tests, structural strength of materials, car wreck mortality statistics, etc. If, on the other hand, you were writing a research paper on the feelings of college students about the Vietnam War during the 1960s, you would need information written in the 1960s by college students (primary sources) as well as materials written since then about college students in the 1960s (secondary sources). Key indicators of the currency of the information are:

- date of copyright
- date of publication
- date of revision or edition
- dates of sources cited
- date of patent or trademark

Relevance: The Importance of the Information for Your Needs

Key Question: How does this source contribute to my research paper?

When you read through your source, consider how the source will effectively support your argument and how you can use the source in your research essay. You should also consider whether the source provides sufficient coverage of the topic. Information sources with broad, shallow coverage mean that you need to find other sources of information to obtain adequate details about your topic. Information sources with a very narrow focus or a distinct bias mean that you need to find additional sources to obtain the information on other aspects of your topic. Some questions to consider are:

- Does the information relate to my topic, research question, or angle in my working thesis?
- Who is the source's intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (e.g., not too simple or advanced) for my needs?
- Did I look at a variety of sources before deciding to use this one?

Authority: The Source of the Information

Key Question: Is the person, organization, or institution responsible for the intellectual content of the information knowledgeable in that subject?

Determining the knowledge and expertise of the author is an important aspect of evaluating the reliability of information. Anyone can make an assertion or a statement about some thing, event, or idea, but only someone who knows or understands what that

thing, event, or idea is can make a reasonably reliable assertion about it. Some external indications of expertise are:

- a formal academic degree in a subject area
- professional or work-related experience, e.g., businessmen, government agency personnel, sports figures, etc. who have expertise in their areas of work
- active involvement in a subject or organization by serious amateurs who spend substantial amounts of personal time researching and studying that subject area
- organizations, agencies, institutions, corporations with active involvement or work in a particular subject area.

HINT: Be careful of opinions stated by professionals outside of their area of work expertise.

Accuracy: The Reliability, Truthfulness, and Correctness of the Information

Key Question: How free from error is this piece of information?

Establishing the accuracy, or relative accuracy, of information is an important part of evaluating the reliability of information. It is easier to establish the accuracy of facts than it is opinions, interpretations, or ideas. The more an idea, opinion, or other piece of information varies from the accepted point of view on a particular topic, the harder it is to establish its accuracy. An important aspect of accuracy is the intellectual integrity of the item:

- Are the sources appropriately cited in the text and listed in the references?
- Are quotations cited correctly and in context? Out-of-context quotations can be misleading and sometimes completely erroneous.
- Are there exaggerations, omissions, or errors? These are difficulty to identify if you use only one source of information, so always use several different sources of information. Analyzing what different sources say about a topic is one way to determine exaggerations, omissions, and errors.

In addition to errors of fact and integrity, you need to watch for errors of logic. Errors of logic occur primarily in the presentation of conclusions, opinions, interpretations, editorials, ideas, etc. Some indications that information is accurate are:

- the same information can be found in other reliable but different sources
- the experiment can be replicated and returns the same results
- the documentation provided in support of the information is substantive
- the sources used for documentation are generally reliable
- the author of the information is known to have expertise on that subject
- the presentation is free from logical fallacies or errors
- quotations are “in context” so that the intended meaning of the information quoted is retained
- quotations, paraphrases, and summaries are correctly cited

Some indications that information may **not** be accurate are:

- facts cannot be verified or are contradicted in other sources
- sources used are known to be unreliable or highly biased
- bibliography of sources used is inadequate or non-existent
- quotations are taken out of context and given a different meaning
- presence of one or more logical fallacies
- authority cited is another part of the same organization
- inclusion of emotionally laden language

Purpose: The Reason the Information Exists

Key Question: Who is this information written for, and what is the author’s purpose?

Identifying the intended audience of the information and identifying the author’s purpose are other important aspects of evaluating information. The intended audience of an item generally determines the style of presentation, the level of technical detail, and the depth of coverage. Determining the intended audience of a particular piece of information will help you decide whether or not the information is too basic, too technical, too general, or just right for your needs. The intended audience can also indicate the potential reliability of the item because some audiences require more documentation than others. For example, items

produced for scholarly or professional audiences are generally produced by experts and go through a peer review process. Items produced for the mass market frequently are not produced by experts and generally do not go through an evaluation process. Some indications of the intended audience are:

- Highly technical language, complex analysis, very sophisticated/technical tools can indicate a technical, professional, or scholarly audience.
- How-to information or current practices in “X” are frequently written by experts for practitioners in that field.
- Substantive and serious presentations of a topic with not too much technical language are generally written for the educated lay audience.
- Popular language, fairly simple presentations of a topic, with little or no analysis, can indicate a general or popular audience.
- Bibliographies, especially long bibliographies, are generally compiled by and for those doing research on that topic.

You should also consider the author’s purpose. Is the information intended to inform or persuade? Does the author intend to present a bias? While it is unlikely that anything humans do is ever absolutely objective, it is important to establish that the information you intend to use is reasonably objective, or if it is not, to establish exactly what the point of view or bias is. There are times when information expressing a particular point of view or bias is useful, but you must use it consciously. You must know what the point of view is and why that point of view is important to your project.

Exercise 2

Review the steps of the CRAAP method and practice evaluating sources in **the following tutorial** from Eastern Michigan University. Be sure to complete the practice exercises at the end of the tutorial. (You may also access the tutorial and activity in a text format.

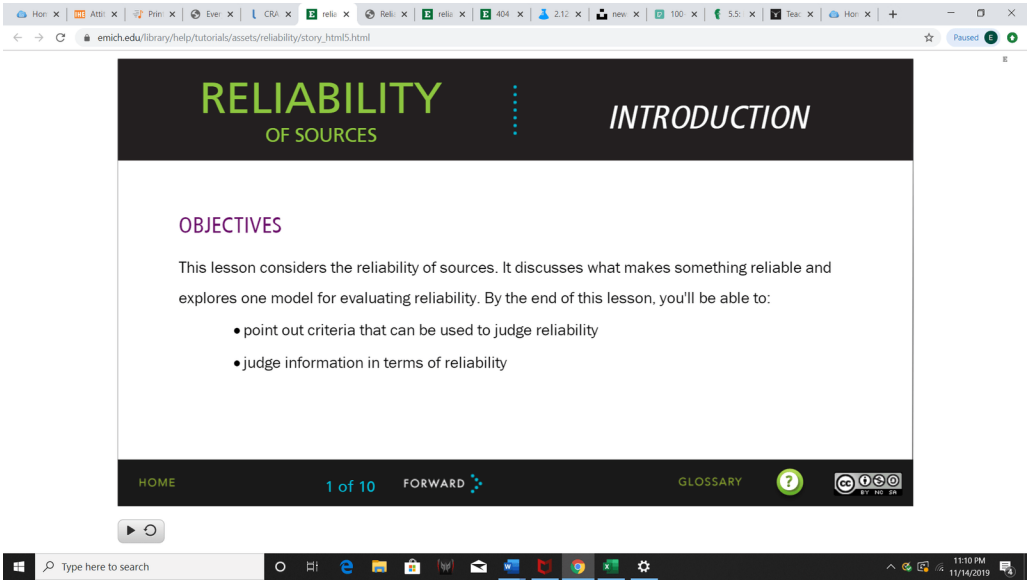

Figure: Some additional questions to keep in mind when evaluating websites follow.

Design

- Is the source professional?
- Does it seem like current design?
- Is the website user-friendly?
- What kinds of images are used?
- Is the navigation menu well-labeled?
- Are there spelling or grammar errors?
- Do the pages appear uncluttered?
- Are there ads or pop-ups on the page?
- Are links working?

Originality

- Was it reproduced? If so, from where? Type a sentence in Google to verify.
- If it was reproduced, was it done so with permission? Are a copyright and/or disclaimer included?

Keep in mind that everything is written from a particular social, cultural, and political perspective. Realize that some publications tend to be "slanted" towards a certain viewpoint. For example, the CATO Institute is known for being libertarian, while The Nation is known to lean left. Keep these slants in mind when you are researching.

Exercise 3

Evaluate each of the sources you plan to use for your research paper by applying the questions of the CRAAP test. Summarize your findings for each of the sources. For those sources that are websites, also evaluate the design and the originality of the source.

Writing at Work

The critical thinking skills you use to evaluate research sources as a student are equally valuable when you conduct research on the job. If you follow certain periodicals or websites, you have probably identified publications that consistently provide reliable information. Reading blogs and online discussion groups is a great way to identify new trends and hot topics in a particular field, but these sources should not be used for substantial research.

Contributors

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10.6: Reading and Note Taking for Research Papers

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Now that you have chosen your sources, it is time to start reading and note taking in an in-depth way.

Managing Source Information

As you determine which sources you will rely on most, it is important to establish a system for keeping track of your sources and taking notes. There are several ways to go about it, and no one system is necessarily superior. What matters is that you keep materials in order; record bibliographical information you will need later; and take detailed, organized notes.

Keeping Track of Your Sources

Think ahead to a moment a few weeks from now, when you've written your research paper and are almost ready to submit it for a grade. There is just one task left—writing your list of sources.

As you begin typing your list, you realize you need to include the publication information for a book you cited frequently. Unfortunately, you already returned it to the library several days ago. You do not remember the URLs for some of the websites you used—information that also must be included in your bibliography. With a sinking feeling, you realize that finding this information and preparing your bibliography will require hours of work.

This stressful scenario can be avoided. Taking time to organize source information now will ensure that you are not scrambling to find it at the last minute. Throughout your research, record bibliographical information for each source as soon as you begin using it. You may use pen-and-paper methods, such as a notebook or note cards, or maintain an electronic list. (If you prefer the latter option, many office software packages include embedded programs for recording bibliographic information and there are a number of online programs to help you format your bibliographic entries.)

The following table, 10.6 -- "Details for Commonly Used Source Types," shows the specific details you should record for commonly used source types. Use these details to develop a working bibliography—a preliminary list of sources that you will later use to develop the references section of your paper. You may wish to record information using the formatting system of the American Psychological Association (APA) or the Modern Language Association (MLA), which will save a step later on. For most composition classes, professors will require MLA format.

Table 10.6 -- Details for Commonly Used Source Types

Source Type	Necessary Information
Book	Author(s), title and subtitle, publisher, city of publication, year of publication
Essay or article published in a book	Include all the information you would for any other book. Additionally, record the essay's or article's title, author(s), the pages on which it appears, and the name of the book's editor(s).
Article in a periodical	Author(s), article title, publication title, date of publication, volume and issue number, and page numbers
Online source	Author(s) (if available), article or document title, organization that sponsors the site, database name (if applicable), date of publication, optional -- check with your professor), date you accessed the site, and URL
Interview	Name of person interviewed, method of communication, date of interview

Exercise 1

Create a working bibliography using the format that is most convenient for you. List at least five sources you plan to use. Continue to add sources to your working bibliography throughout the research process. If you decide not to use a source, you can delete it.

Tip

You may want to keep a special folder in your computers file system to hold research you've found for your paper so that you can find it all easily.

Taking Notes Efficiently

Good researchers stay focused and organized as they gather information from sources. Before you begin taking notes, take a moment to step back and think about your goal as a researcher—to find information that will help you answer your research question. When you write your paper, you will present your conclusions about the topic supported by research. That goal will determine what information you record and how you organize it.

Writers sometimes get caught up in taking extensive notes, so much so that they lose sight of how their notes relate to the questions and ideas they started out with. Remember that you do not need to write down every detail from your reading. In fact, it is better to take notes on the main ideas and annotate based on your thoughts. If you find an especially interesting quote, but it isn't a main idea -- just highlight it and write down your thoughts about it -- again, just like a conversation. These might help you develop your analysis and explanation when drafting your paper. Focus mainly on finding and recording main ideas and important points that will help you answer your research questions.

The following strategies will help you take and organize notes efficiently.

Use Themed Headings and Color Coding to Organize Ideas

If you created a mind map or KWL+ chart during any part of the early phase of thinking about your research paper, you may have already pre-identified some themes that you might focus on while you are reading. Inevitably you will find other repeating opinions or thoughts about the topic. You might also find some that stand out on their own as an innovative way of looking at the topic. For instance, when Miguel researches his question about low-carbohydrate diets, he will likely find opinions about energy needs, the standard American diet (SAD), and synthesis of fats and carbohydrates while burning calories. He also will likely find various people's personal experiences with such diets. He did not expect to find information about the carbohydrate needs of people going through various disease process, such as fighting cancer, however. When Miguel found in a couple of different article that the carbohydrate needs of people with certain diseases were different from the average person, he identified a new theme and an unexpected viewpoint. He added this to the subtopics he planned to cover.

As you read, you will inevitably find some recurring subtopics, opinions, or themes regarding your research question. If you have a large number of sources. and they are printed or in an e-reader with annotation tools, it can be helpful to identify and color code for these themes, especially if you are a visual learner. You can do this by matching a color of a sticky note or flag or e-highlighter for each theme you identify. Then, as you read, along with your written annotations, you can place a flag, sticky note or highlight in the appropriate color on that page for that theme. Usually, research papers are organized by subtopic or theme, so as you develop each section later on, you can more easily find the relevant points each writer makes about the topic or theme. This will help avoid the "patchwork" problem that occurs when you just try to works with one author at a time rather than one theme at a time. You will also more easily be able to find your reactions and thoughts about each topic.

Example

Central Question:

Why Is No One Doing Anything about Violence Against Native American Women?

Native American women's voices

Strange Law Enforcement Boundaries

Bad Statistics

Colonization

Psychology of Trauma

Exercise 2

Choose a color for each theme/major topic in your notes. As you read and annotate, place a sticky note in the relevant color wherever you see that an author is writing about that theme/major topic. If you are using an e-reader, highlight the quote or section of the text with that highlighter color.

Maintain Complete, Accurate Notes

Regardless of the format used, any notes you take should include enough information to help you organize ideas and locate them instantly in the original text if you need to review them. Make sure your notes include the following elements:

- Heading summing up the main topic covered
- Author's name, a source code, or an abbreviated source title
- Page number
- Full URL of any pages buried deep in a website

Throughout the process of taking notes, be scrupulous about making sure you have correctly attributed each idea to its source. Always include source information so you know exactly which ideas came from which sources. Use quotation marks to set off any

words for phrases taken directly from the original text. If you add your own responses and ideas, make sure they are distinct from ideas you quoted or paraphrased.

Make sure your notes accurately reflect the content of the original text. Make sure quoted material is copied verbatim with no mistakes. If you omit words from a quotation, use ellipses to show the omission and make sure the omission does not change the author's meaning. Paraphrase ideas carefully, and check your paraphrased notes against the original text to make sure that you have restated the author's ideas accurately in your own words.

You may also want to start a document where you begin to organize your notes by topic or theme (not by author). In your document, using bold headers so you can easily find them later when typing in notes, type in the themes or topics that you have identified. Then, after you read a source, place the quote or paraphrase you identified while reading, along with the important source information mentioned in the bulleted list, above, in that section. If you wrote down an annotation with your thoughts along with the quote, make sure you get that into your document (you may or may not use it later).

Here is an example of what that document may look like during the process:

Central Question:

Why Is No One Doing Anything about Violence Against Native American Women?

Indigenous women in the U.S. and Canada have been experiencing an extraordinary amount of violence and murder for years, but only recently has their plight been receiving some media and government attention.

Native American women's voices

Brown, Alleen. "Indigenous Women Have Been Disappearing for Generations. Politicians Are Finally Starting to Notice." *The Intercept*. 2018, May 31. Retrieved from theintercept.com/2018/05/31/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women/.

Strange Law Enforcement Boundaries

It is difficult to gather information because of the patchwork of laws and authority from various jurisdictions (the tribal authorities, local police, state police, and the FBI and Canadian federal police).

Bad Statistics

Healy, Jack. "In Indian County, A Crisis of Missing Women. And a New One When They're Found." *New York Times*. 2019, Dec. 25. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/25/us/native-women-girls-missing.html.

Also, when record-keeping does happen, many Indigenous women are miscategorized and, thus, are not recognized as Native in the statistics

"Activists describe the crisis as a legacy of generations of government policies of forced removal, land seizures and violence inflicted on Indigenous people. Hundreds of the missing never return, and families said they have struggled to find counseling and treatment for those who do. Some are trying to cope with the trauma of being trafficked. Some are confronting addiction or grappling with violence they suffered on the streets. Some had fled abuse at home and do not have a safe place to welcome them back" (Healy).

Colonization

So there a number of questions here – who is luring women and girls (or just taking them) to be trafficked and why has so little attention been paid to this problem? Part of this issue is the more than 500-plus-year legacy of brutal colonization.

Psychology of Trauma

Alvarez, A. and Bachman, R. *Violence: The Enduring Problem*. 2017. Sage.

Could such treatment of Indigenous women (no matter who the culprits are) be a matter of learned behavior that is passed down through generations (Alvarez and Bachman)? It seems that's partly possible because otherwise how would outside people know whether to go to kidnap women on a reservation?

Exercise 3

After you have annotated your texts(s), create a document in a word processing program with color-coded headers for each of the themes or sub-topics you have identified. Place the relevant quotes or paraphrases under each header with the source and page number, and write down your thoughts about that quote or paraphrase

Know When to Summarize, Paraphrase, or Directly Quote a Source

Your notes will fall under three categories—summary notes, paraphrased information, and direct quotations from your sources. Effective researchers make choices about which types of notes are most appropriate for their purposes.

- Summary notes sum up the main ideas in a source in a few sentences or a short paragraph. A summary is considerably shorter than the original text and captures only the major ideas. Use summary notes when you do not need to record specific details but you intend to refer to broad concepts the author discusses.
- Paraphrased notes restate a fact or idea from a source using your own words and sentence structure.
- Direct quotations use the exact wording used by the original source and enclose the quoted material in quotation marks. It is a good strategy to copy direct quotations when an author expresses an idea in an especially lively or memorable way. However, do not rely exclusively on direct quotations in your note taking.

Most of your notes should be paraphrased from the original source. Paraphrasing as you take notes is usually a better strategy than copying direct quotations, because it forces you to think through the information in your source and understand it well enough to restate it. Also, the majority of the information in most research writing is paraphrased, so it is a good skill to practice. In short, paraphrasing helps you stay engaged with the material instead of simply copying and pasting. It will also allow you to synthesize the ideas more easily later when you begin planning and drafting your paper. (For detailed guidelines on summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting, see "Summarizing" and "Working with Sources").

Use a System That Works for You

There are several formats you can use to take notes. No technique is necessarily better than the others—it is more important to choose a format you are comfortable using. Choosing the format that works best for you will ensure your notes are organized, complete, and accurate. Consider implementing one of these formats when you begin taking notes:

- **Annotate directly on your sources.** This method involves making handwritten notes in the margins of sources that you have printed or photocopied and or taking notes on an e-reader. This works well with the color-coding strategy mentioned above, but does require a two-step process to then get the notes organized so that the ideas can be synthesized.
- **Use index cards.** This traditional format involves writing each note on a separate index card. It takes more time than copying and pasting into an electronic document, which encourages you to be selective in choosing which ideas to record. Recording notes on separate cards makes it easy to later organize your notes according to major topics. Some writers color-code their cards to make them still more organized.
- **Use note-taking software.** Word-processing and office software packages often include different types of note-taking software. Although you may need to set aside some time to learn the software, this method combines the speed of typing with the same degree of organization associated with handwritten note cards.
- **Create a word processing document.** This strategy is less comprehensive than note-taking software but, as explained above in "Maintain Complete, Accurate Notes," it will allow you to more easily make the transition between recording and organizing your notes.
- **Maintain a research notebook.** Instead of using index cards or electronic note cards, you may wish to keep a notebook, allotting a few pages (or one file) for each of your sources. This method makes it easy to create a separate column or section of the document where you add your responses to the information you encounter in your research. This is basically the low-tech version of the strategy previously mentioned.

Annotated Bibliographies

Although they can be quite a bit of work, annotated bibliographies help you ensure that you understand the general gist of what you are reading and think about whether and how a source will be useful for you. It is the beginning step of synthesizing your ideas.

The annotated bibliography should have at least the number of entries that are required by your instructor's research assignment. They should all be suitable and trustworthy, as discussed in section 5.5. These are the sources you will use in your research paper although it is possible that your final paper will have some sources that aren't included here and that you end up not using some sources that you do list here. This is because of the recursive nature of the research process.

Each entry of an annotated bibliography should have the following components:

- A bibliographic (Works Cited) entry formatted according to MLA or APA (depending on what is required in your class).
- A short paragraph (three to five sentences) summarizing the source in your own words. When using a research paper as a source, d**o not use an abstract as your summary.** Write the paragraph in your own words.
- A short paragraph stating your opinion about the source -- is it well written and credible? Do the ideas seem logically and fully expressed? Is there enough support to back up the author's assertions? This critique paragraph (again, about three to four sentences) takes into account the items you considered when determining whether the source was credible, but in a way that relates more to the details of the source.
- One final short paragraph (two to three sentences) about how the source will help you write your paper. Will you use it in any particular section or for any particular purpose?

The entries in your annotated bibliography should appear in the same order you would include them on a Works Cited page -- alphabetized by author. On your final Works Cited page with your final paper, however, you should not include any of the paragraphs that appear in the annotated bibliography; just include the bibliographic entry. In addition, the Works Cited page on your final paper should only include those sources that you actually ended up using in your final paper.

Example Annotated Bibliography Entry

Camorlinga, S. and Barker, K. "A complex adaptive system based on squirrel behavior for distributed resource allocation." *Web Intelligence and Agent Systems: An*

International Journal 4, 2006, pp. 1-23.

This journal article by two Canadian researchers describes how they use squirrel hoarding behavior as a model for creating an algorithm for figuring out the most efficient distributed storage solutions for computer networks. They also test whether such an algorithm is scalable to larger distributed systems.

This article is technical, specific, and clear regarding the rationale for the model. The testing is easy to follow, as is the way in which one can use it in larger systems. Because this is innovative, the article is understandably long because they must provide a strong rationale for the research because not too many people have done this specific sort of work.

This research provides a perspective that was innovative ten years ago when it was written. I will use it as a basis of my research to see if the algorithm or model has been refined, if it has been replicated, and whether it's actually in use.

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10.7: Critical Thinking and Research Applications

Figure: Picture from Pixabay

Using Sources Overview

At this point in your project, you are preparing to move from the research phase to the writing phase. You have gathered much of the information you will use, and soon you will be ready to begin writing your draft. This section helps you transition smoothly from one phase to the next. One of the challenges of writing an essay using sources is successfully integrating your ideas with the material from your sources. Your essay must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the balance?

Balancing your own ideas with sources' ideas involves synthesizing the information from those sources so that you can blend multiple source ideas into your own idea structure that supports your thesis. Beginning writers sometimes attempt to transform a pile of note cards into a formal research paper without any intermediary step. This approach presents problems. The writer's original question may be buried in a flood of disconnected details taken from research sources. The first draft may present redundant or contradictory information. Worst of all, the writer's ideas and voice may be lost.

An effective research paper focuses on the writer's ideas—from the question that sparked the research process to how the writer answers that question based on the research findings. Before beginning a draft, or even an outline, good writers pause and reflect. They ask themselves questions such as the following:

- How has my thinking changed based on my research? What have I learned?
- Now that I've read all of this information, what might my working thesis be?
- 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 contradict or complement each other? What ideas or facts recur in multiple sources?
- Where do my sources disagree with each other, and why?

In this section, you will reflect on your research and review the information you have gathered. You will determine what you now think about your topic. You will synthesize, or put together, different pieces of information that help you answer your research questions. Finally, you will determine the organizational structure that works best for your paper and begin planning your outline.

Selecting Useful Information

At this point in the research process, you have gathered information from a wide variety of sources. Now it is time to think about how you will use this information as a writer. When you conduct research, you keep an open mind and seek out many promising sources. You take notes on any information that looks like it might help you answer your research questions. Often, new ideas and terms come up in your reading, and these, too, find their way into your notes. You may record facts or quotations that catch your attention even if they did not seem immediately relevant to your research question. By now, you have probably amassed an impressively detailed collection of notes.

You will not use all of your notes in your paper.

Good researchers are thorough. They look at multiple perspectives, facts, and ideas related to their topic, and they gather a great deal of information. Effective writers, however, are selective. They determine which information is most relevant and appropriate for their purpose. They include details that develop or explain their ideas—and they leave out details that do not. The writer, not the pile of notes, is the controlling force. The writer shapes the content of the research paper.

As Miguel reviewed his research notes, he realized that some of the information was not especially useful for his purpose. His notes included several statements about the relationship between soft drinks that are high in sugar and childhood obesity—a subtopic that was too far outside of the main focus of the paper. Jorge decided to cut this material.

Writing at Work

When you create workplace documents based on research, selectivity remains important. A project team may spend months conducting market surveys to prepare for rolling out a new product, but few managers have time to read the research in its entirety. Most employees want the research distilled into a few well-supported points. Focused, concise writing is highly valued in the workplace.

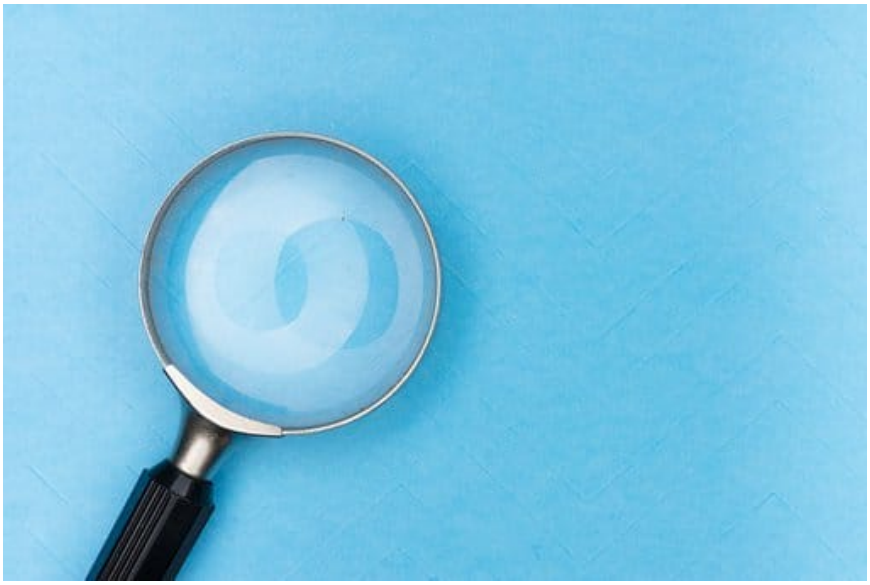


Figure: Picture from Pixabay

Identify Information That Helps Answer your Research Question

The process of writing informally, such as doing a little free writing without looking at any of your notes, can help you see how you might begin to pull together what you have learned from your research. It also will likely lead to a working thesis, which is an answer to your overarching research question. Do not feel anxious, however, if you still have trouble seeing the big picture. Systematically looking through your notes will help you.

If you haven't used a pre-organization strategy, such as a mind map, begin by identifying the notes that clearly answer your

research question. Mark or group these, either physically or using the cut-and-paste function in your word-processing program.

If you did create a mind map and have identified themes, create a word processing document with these themes as headers. Place the relevant notes under the appropriate header in the document.

As you identify the crucial details that support your thesis, make sure you analyze them critically. Ask the following questions to focus your thinking:

- **Is this detail from a reliable, high-quality source? Is it appropriate for me to cite this source in an academic paper?** The support for your thesis should come from reliable, reputable sources. 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. However, if you chose suitable and trustworthy sources in the first place, this should not be a problem.
- **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.
- **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.

Tip

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 issue. More importantly, it can help you question and refine your own thinking so that writing your research paper is a true learning process.

Find Connections between Your Sources

Finding connections between your sources is the beginning of synthesizing information. Watch the following video to give you an idea of what synthesis is.

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

Video 10.7.1

Synthesizing Information. **Provided by:** GCFLearnFree.org. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

As you find connections between your ideas and information in your sources, also look for information that connects 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.

Finally, do not ignore any information simply because it does not support your thesis. Carefully consider how that information fits into the big picture of your research. You may decide that the source is unreliable or the information is not relevant, or you may decide that it is an important point you need to bring up. What matters is that you give it careful consideration. The following video addresses some ways to connect and synthesize your 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

Video 10.7.1

Strategies for Synthesis. **Provided by:** Dr. Mary Lourdes Silva. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

One of the strategies the video mentions is visual in nature. A related way to organize your sources (once you've identified which ones you'll use) is to bring out your mind map again and write down the author of the source you will use in each topic/theme bubble. When you're done, the same source will likely appear in multiple bubbles. Some bubbles will have multiple sources; others will have one. Some may have none, which means you either need to do a little more research or decide whether you want to include that subtopic or eliminate it. See the following sample mind map (on a different topic) once he has organized his sources in this way.

Figure: by Erika Dyquisto.

Synthesizing and Organizing Information

By now your thinking on your topic is taking shape. You have a sense of what major ideas to address in your paper, what points you can easily support, and what questions or subtopics might need a little more thought. In short, you have begun the process of synthesizing information—that is, of putting the pieces together into a coherent whole.

It is normal to find this part of the process a little difficult. Some questions or concepts may still be unclear to you. You may not yet know how you will tie all of your research together. Synthesizing information is a complex, demanding mental task, and even experienced researchers struggle with it at times. A little uncertainty is often a good sign! It means you are challenging yourself to work thoughtfully with your topic instead of simply restating the same information.

Use Your Research Questions to Synthesize Information

You have already considered how your notes fit with your working thesis. Now, take your synthesis a step further. Analyze how your notes relate to your major research question and the sub-questions you identified. Organize your notes with headings that correspond to those questions. As you proceed, you might identify some important subtopics that were not part of your original plan, or you might decide that some questions are not relevant to your paper.

Categorize information carefully and continue to think critically about the material. Ask yourself whether the sources are reliable and whether the connections between ideas are clear.

Remember, your ideas and conclusions will shape the paper. They are the glue that holds the rest of the content together. As you work, begin jotting down the big ideas you will use to connect the dots for your reader. (If you are not sure where to begin, try answering your major research question and sub-questions. Add and answer new questions as appropriate.) You might record these big ideas on sticky notes or type and highlight them within an electronic document.

Use Your Mind Map to Synthesize Information

If you used a mind map, edited it to represent to add and delete and themes you discovered or eliminated while reading your research, and wrote down which sources "map" to which topics, you can also use it to identify the types of connections between your sources. This is a key step in synthesis.

In order to do this, you want to think about logical connections (see the chart in "Clause Joining"). Think about which logical relationship connects the points of view or ideas of the sources that appear in each bubble. For instance, you may have two sources that agree about a topic, but one that disagrees or brings in some other type of viewpoint. Place a representative symbol for each connection on your mind map so that you can translate that into your writing when you draft each section. For instance, Miguel might place a plus ("+") sign between the two sources that agree about a topic but place a minus ("-") sign next to the source that disagrees. See his amended mind map, below.

Figure: by Erika Dyquisto

Miguel looked back on the list of research questions that he had written down earlier. He also reviewed his bubble map, and he began a rough outline for his paper.

Topic: *Low-carbohydrate diets*
Main question: *Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?*
Thesis: *Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.*
Main points:
How do low-carb diets work?
Low-carb diets cause weight loss by lowering insulin levels, causing the body to burn stored fat.
When did low-carb diets become a "hot" topic in the media?
The Atkins diet was created in 1972 by Richard Atkins, but it didn't gain wide-scale attention until 2003. The South Beach diet and other low-carb diets became popular around the same time, and led to a low-carb craze in America from 2003 to 2004.
What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
They are said to help you lose weight faster than other diets and allow people to continue to eat protein and fats while dieting.
What are some of the negative effects of a low-carb diet?
Eating foods high in saturated fats can increase your cholesterol levels and lead to heart disease. Incomplete fat breakdown can lead to a condition called ketosis, which puts a strain on the liver and can be fatal.

Exercise 1

Choose the strategies from above that you believe will work best for you based on your dominant learning style, identified in Chapter 1, "Understanding Yourself as a Learner." Use those strategies to a) organize your research and b) connect your research to help you answer your research question. After completing Exercise 2, decide and take notes about whether the strategies were effective for you and what you might do differently next time.

Exercise 2

Apply the strategies you identified in Exercise 1 to your research planning, and then create an outline that answers our research question.

You may be wondering how your ideas are supposed to shape the paper, especially since you are writing a research paper based on your research. Integrating your ideas and your information from research is a complex process, and sometimes it can be difficult to separate the information from the ideas.

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 facts from your research by grouping related ideas or pointing out connections or contrasts. Go back and review the connections between your sources if you need to. The result is that you are not simply presenting information; you are synthesizing, analyzing, and interpreting it.

One main method of synthesizing source information with your own ideas is to offer your own comments and insights about others' ideas that you have included from your research. Once you have analyzed the texts involved in your research and taken notes, you must turn to the task of writing your essay. The goal is here is not simply to summarize your findings. *Critical writing requires that you communicate your analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of those findings to your audience*.

Re-evaluate Your Working Thesis

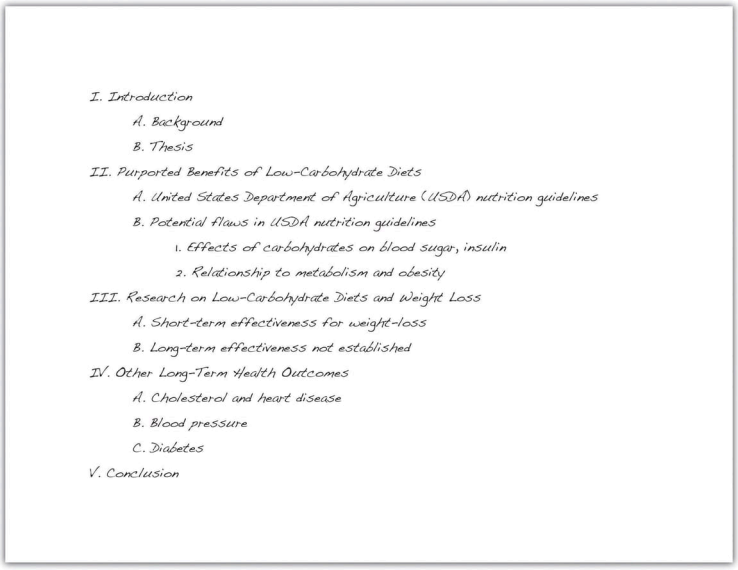
A careful analysis of your notes will help you reevaluate your working thesis and determine whether you need to revise it. Remember that your working thesis was the starting point—not necessarily the end point—of your research. You should revise your working thesis if your focus changed based on what you read. 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 so that it is a little more specific.

Miguel realized that his working thesis oversimplified the issues. He still believed that the media was exaggerating the benefits of low-carb diets. However, his research led him to conclude that these diets did have some advantages. Miguel revised his thesis to read: 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.

Plan How to Organize Your Paper

The final step to complete before beginning your draft is to choose an organizational structure. For some assignments, this may be determined by the instructor's requirements. For instance, if you are asked to explore the impact of a new communications device, a cause-and-effect structure is obviously appropriate. In other cases, you will need to determine the structure based on what suits your topic and purpose. For more information about the structures used in writing, see Chapter 4.

The purpose of Miguel's paper was primarily to persuade. With that in mind, he planned the following outline.



I. Introduction
    A. Background
    B. Thesis
II. Purported Benefits of Low-Carbohydrate Diets
    A. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition guidelines
    B. Potential flaws in USDA nutrition guidelines
        1. Effects of carbohydrates on blood sugar, insulin
        2. Relationship to metabolism and obesity
III. Research on Low-Carbohydrate Diets and Weight Loss
    A. Short-term effectiveness for weight-loss
    B. Long-term effectiveness not established
IV. Other Long-Term Health Outcomes
    A. Cholesterol and heart disease
    B. Blood pressure
    C. Diabetes
V. Conclusion

Figure: Exercise 3

Review the organizational structures discussed in this section and in Chapter 9. Working with the notes you organized earlier, follow these steps to begin planning how to organize your paper.

1. Create an outline that includes your thesis, major subtopics, and supporting points.

2. The major headings in your outline will become sections or paragraphs in your paper. Remember that *your* ideas should form the backbone of the paper. For each major section of your outline, write out a topic sentence stating the main point you will make in that section.

3. As you complete step 2, you may find that some points are too complex to explain in a sentence. Consider whether any major sections of your outline need to be broken up, and jot down additional topic sentences as needed.

4. Review your notes and determine how the different pieces of information fit into your outline as supporting points.

Collaboration:

Please share the outline you created with a classmate. Examine your classmate's outline and see if any questions come to mind or if you see any area that would benefit from an additional point or clarification. Return the outlines to each other and compare observations.

Writing at Work

The structures described in this section and Chapter 9 can also help you organize information in different types of workplace documents. For instance, medical incident reports and police reports follow a chronological structure. If the company must choose between two vendors to provide a service, you might write an e-mail to your supervisor comparing and contrasting the choices. Understanding when and how to use each organizational structure can help you write workplace documents efficiently and effectively.

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10.8: Creating a Rough Draft for a Research Paper

At last, you are ready to begin writing the rough draft of your research paper. Putting your thinking and research into words is exciting. It can also be challenging. In this section, you will learn strategies for handling the more challenging aspects of writing a research paper, such as integrating material from your sources, citing information correctly, and avoiding any misuse of your sources. First, however, we will discuss the structure of the longest type of research paper you are likely to write in a first-year composition course.

The Structure of a Research Paper

General Structure Guidelines for Research Papers

There are really two types of formal research papers: A scientific style research paper and a literature review style research paper. We will focus on the literature review style of research paper, which is really like an extended essay. However, even a literature review depends more on the research that other people have done than does a regular essay. You still bring in your own ideas, however, make the connections between everything, and come up with new ideas based on how you put together the ideas of other writers.

The structure of a research paper is very much like that of a regular essay except that your main idea may not be as clear early on (check with your instructor about this), the introduction may be longer than usual, the body of the essay is much longer, and you use many more sources. Do not describe your research process of researching and writing in a literature review research paper (scientific research papers have a methodology section where the researcher does describe their research, but that's not what you generally do in a first year composition course).

Research Paper Introductions

Write the introduction of your research paper last. If you *must* write it first to get yourself going, be sure to rewrite after you have completed your conclusion. Keep your audience in mind and what they are likely to know about your topic before reading your paper. Research paper introduction may last two or more paragraphs. Because you are writing more, you probably need to provide more background information. As in any paper, you want to move from general information that orients your reader to your topic, to more specific information that focuses more directly on what you are studying. At the end of the introduction, you may want to state your exact research question rather than a thesis.

Introductions may provide some historical background, may discuss the history of a controversy, may introduce the various factors that impact the topic, and probably introduce and define some of the key vocabulary that your reader may not know. Don't make the mistake of beginning too narrowly. Keep your reader in mind – another student in another class. Think of your research paper as an educational piece of writing that you are creating for another student, but keep the tone and language formal. Remember, they don't know what you are going to write about, so orient them to your topic by beginning broadly.

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 main research question or, perhaps, the thesis.

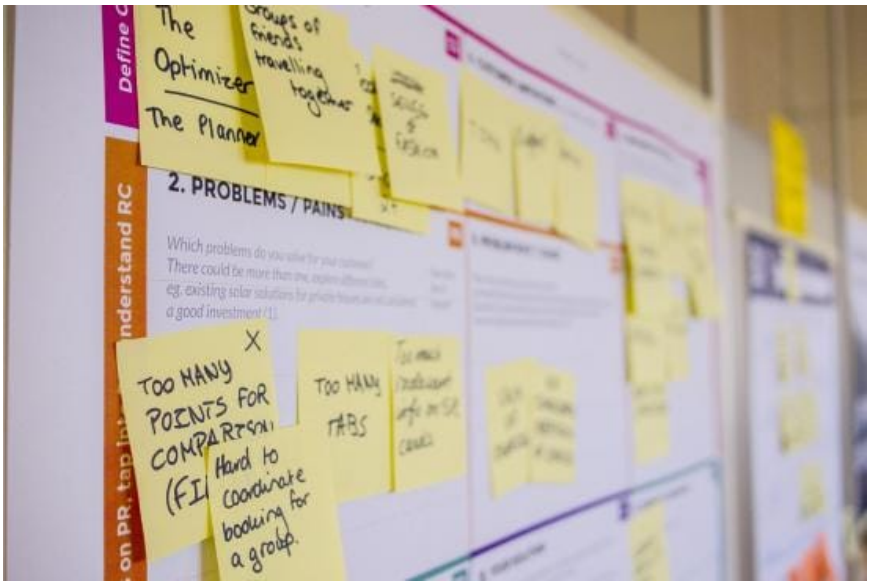

Figure: by Daria Nepriakhina on Unsplash.

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

For more information, see the "Introductions and Conclusions" sections in Chapter 4.

The next few sentences place the opening in context by presenting background information. From there, the writer builds toward the research question or a thesis, which is traditionally placed at the end of the introduction. Either of these will let your readers know what direction the paper is headed.

Miguel decided to begin his research paper by connecting his topic to readers' daily experiences. Read the first draft of his introduction. The research question is underlined. Note how Miguel progresses from the opening sentences to background information to his thesis:

> Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. Some studies estimate that approximately 40 million Americans, or about 20 percent of the population, are attempting to restrict their intake of food high in carbohydrates (Sanders and Katz, Hirsch). 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. With so much conflicting information swirling around, how are we to know whether low-carbohydrate diets the best choice for most people?

Thesis Location

The thesis for a research paper may only be implied until the conclusion of your paper. You will hint at it through your topic sentences and the way you discuss the information. However, the stated thesis most likely won't occur until the beginning of your conclusion. The reason for this is the purpose of a research paper, which is academic inquiry. You don't want to enter the research process thinking you already know what you want to say with an already determined point of view. You want to enter the process with an open mind of exploration. This is where your research question will really help you. It keeps you objective so that you may say to yourself (or write in your paper), "these authors take xxxx perspective on this topic because….." Then you can evaluate the merits of that point of view in your paper. It's not until you've discussed all of the relevant opinions and research that you should come to a conclusion. This is what an informed and thoughtful person does – evaluates the various arguments and information and arrives at an informed conclusion. In effect, that's what you're doing on paper for your reader.

The Body of the Research Paper

Write the body of your research paper first. The body of the research paper is very much like the body of a regular essay . . . only longer. Each paragraph needs a main idea, to be cohesive, and to discuss and support that idea. Each paragraph needs explanation so that the reader knows why this particular thing or point of view you are writing about is important. You should make it clear how the topic you are discussing in the paragraph connects or helps answer your guiding question. You may organize your research paper into multiple sections, each with its own main idea and multiple paragraphs.

Transitions between ideas can be more important in research papers than in traditional essays because you, as the writer, are synthesizing so much more information. There may be multiple points of view about a topic, different kinds of relationships between ideas and multiple levels of information that you need to deal with. With so much information swirling around, one of your main tasks is to convey to your reader what to think about all of this information and guide them through it. To write transitions, you cannot simply write about one author's work and then another; you must group and sort the information by theme, and point of view, and then write transitions to lead your reader through the forest of information (see the "they say/I say" discussion on the second video on this page).

The Conclusion of the Research Paper

Write the conclusion after you have written the body of your research paper. Just as in most essays, the conclusion of a research paper should look to the future and broaden out from your particular topic. Also, it should begin with a transition from the last section into your thesis. It can also help to think about what we still need to know about this topic or what we still need to know or understand to answer your central question. To write a conclusion, ask yourself: What might we expect or hope to learn about this topic in the future? What else needs to be examined to answer this question? How will this knowledge help us in other ways? In what areas can this knowledge be applied? What other perspectives might be considered in future research?

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.

Tip

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 of all of the body.

Writing at Work (and in the sciences)

If your job involves writing or reading scientific papers, it helps to understand how professional researchers use the structure described in this section. A scientific paper begins with an abstract that briefly summarizes the entire paper. The introduction explains the purpose of the research, briefly summarizes previous research, and presents the researchers' hypothesis. The body provides details about the study, such as who participated in it, what the researchers measured, and what results they recorded. The conclusion presents the researchers' interpretation of the data, or what they learned.

Using Source Material in Your Paper

One of the challenges of writing a research paper is successfully integrating your ideas with material from your sources. Your paper must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research, or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the right balance?

As you can see, using sources involves much more than just including a series of quotations in your essay. To avoid falling into the trap of having strings of quotations and very little else in a research essay, follow a few simple pointers:

- Avoid using strings of long quotations. The overuse of long quotations gives the reader the impression you cannot think for yourself.
- Use summaries and paraphrases in addition to direct quotations. To the reader, the effective use of summaries and paraphrases indicates that you took the time to think about the meaning behind the quote's words.
- Make sure to comment on any information you quote, summarize, and paraphrase. Remember that your researched information is there to support to your own ideas and logical argument in your research essay, and that incorporating research is like creating a conversation.
- Finally, make sure to identify all of your quoted, summarized, and paraphrased information with citations, so your reader can easily differentiate your sources' from your own information and ideas.

In the body paragraphs of your paper, you will need to integrate ideas carefully at the paragraph level and at the sentence level. Use topic sentences in your paragraphs to make sure readers understand the significance of any facts, details, or quotations you cite. You will also need to include sentences that transition between ideas from your research, either within a paragraph or between paragraphs. At the sentence level, you will need to think carefully about how you introduce paraphrased and quoted material.

Earlier you learned about summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting when taking notes. In the next few sections, you will learn how to use these techniques in the body of your paper to weave in source material to support your ideas.

Summarizing Sources

When you summarize material from a source, you zero in on the main points and restate them concisely in your own words. If you wrote an annotated bibliography, you have already done this and can incorporate just the parts of those summaries you may need into your research paper. Also, see the "summary" section in this e-book. This technique is appropriate when only the major ideas are relevant to your paper or when you need to simplify complex information into a few key points for your readers.

In his draft, Miguel summarized research materials that presented scientists' findings about low-carbohydrate diets. Read the following passage from a trade magazine article and Miguel's summary of the article.

Assessing the Efficacy of Low-Carbohydrate Diets

Adrienne Howell, Ph.D.

Over the past few years, a number of clinical studies have explored whether high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets are more effective for weight loss than other frequently recommended diet plans, such as diets that drastically curtail fat intake (Pritikin) or that emphasize consuming lean meats, grains, vegetables, and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats (the Mediterranean diet). A 2009 study by Jones found that obese teenagers who followed a low-carbohydrate diet lost an average of 15.6 kilograms over a six-month period, whereas teenagers following a low-fat diet or a Mediterranean diet lost an average of 11.1 kilograms and 9.3 kilograms respectively. Two 2010 studies (Kirkhoff and Mashoud, Janus and Beebe) that measured weight loss for obese adults following these same three diet plans found similar results. Over three months, subjects on the low-carbohydrate diet plan lost anywhere from four to six kilograms more than subjects who followed other diet plans.

summary

In three recent studies, researchers compared outcomes for obese subjects who followed either a low-carbohydrate diet, a low-fat diet, or a Mediterranean diet and found that subjects following a low-carbohydrate diet lost more weight in the same time (Howell, 2010).

Tip

A summary restates ideas in your own words -- but for specialized or clinical terms, you may need to use terms that appear in the original source. For instance, Miguel used the term *obese* in his summary because related words such as *heavy* or *overweight* have a different clinical meaning.

Paraphrasing Sources

A paraphrase re-states information and ideas from a source using your own wording and sentence structure. Paraphrasing is similar to summarizing; however, summaries condense the original down to the essential or main ideas, while paraphrases simply re-state the original portion of text in your own words.

So why paraphrase? Paraphrasing offers a way to maintain your own writing style and voice throughout the writing. It helps cut down on the number of different styles from different sources, creating a sleeker, easier reading experience for your reader. Most of all, though, paraphrasing is a means of helping you understand what your sources are saying, in order to incorporate that information into your own writing. You have to understand the source's ideas fully in order to rewrite them clearly.

When you paraphrase, make sure *not* to simply substitute one word for another, retaining the same sentence structure. Paraphrasing requires you to use your own sentence structures as well as words, so that you are not inadvertently plagiarizing the source.

In general, it is best to paraphrase when:

- There is no good reason to use a quote to refer to your evidence. If the author's exact words are not especially important to the point you are trying to make, you are usually better off paraphrasing the evidence.
- You are trying to explain technical information or complicated language to a more general reading audience.
- You are trying to explain a particular a piece of evidence in order to explain or interpret it in more detail. This might be particularly true in writing projects like critiques.
- You need to balance a direct quote in your writing. You need to be careful about directly quoting your research too much because it can sometimes make for awkward and difficult to read prose. So, one of the reasons to use a paraphrase instead of a quote is to create balance within your writing.

But before we can go into the "how to" of paraphrasing, we should examine the sometimes fine line between paraphrasing and plagiarism. Doing so is important because many fields (especially in the sciences) very rarely or never use quotation, exclusively using paraphrasing instead. Second, not paraphrasing well is the cause behind many if not most cases of plagiarism, so to avoid accidental plagiarism, you should learn how to paraphrase well. Finally, almost everyone needs to paraphrase sometimes; in fact, you most likely already do, at least in conversation.

How Plagiarism Often Happens

Plagiarism is the act of misrepresenting someone else's work as your own. Sometimes a writer plagiarizes work on purpose—for instance, by purchasing an essay from a website and submitting it as original course work. In other cases, a writer may commit accidental plagiarism due to carelessness, haste, or misunderstanding. To avoid unintentional plagiarism, follow these guidelines:

- Understand what types of information must be cited.
- Understand what constitutes fair use of a source.
- Keep source materials and notes carefully organized.
- Follow guidelines for summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources.

Plagiarism is usually not the obvious kind of cut-and-paste theft you might associate with cheating on a research paper. Rather, writers think about what they want to communicate and what's important to them. They usually develop a theme on their own, research it, and find a number of sources to draw from. The result of this research is a bunch of fragments from all over the place. One of those fragments, if not properly paraphrased *and* cited as the fragments coalesced into a paper, becomes an example of plagiarism because the writer lost track of its origin.

Carelessness often creates plagiarism. For example, the famous scientist Jane Goodall, who studied wild chimpanzees, blamed "chaotic note taking" for plagiarized passages in her book, *Seeds of Hope*.

This video explains it a little more.

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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Video 10.8.1

Plagiarism . . . Definition, Consequences and Examples. **Authored by:** NurseKillam. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License

Carefully organizing your time and notes is the best guard against these forms of plagiarism. Maintain a detailed working bibliography and thorough notes throughout the research process. Check original sources again to clear up any uncertainties. Allow plenty of time for writing your draft so there is no temptation to cut corners.

How to Avoid This Mistake

How do you gather your notes? Do you bookmark Web passages, use Evernote or Zotero, or create index cards or sticky notes? No matter your method, you should have a consistent and clear method to keep track of your sources.

Within your writing, you can use sources ethically and avoid plagiarism by identifying or attributing your source, even when you paraphrase. Some students think you only need to cite your source if you quote. That's not true -- any source, whether it's a quote or a paraphrase, must be cited in order to avoid a charge of plagiarism. Your mind can run free, your text can flow, but your attributions must be as fastidious as an accountant's.

Tip

Many courses at college have an online component of the class. In California, this is usually Canvas. Your instructor may set up some of your assignments so that they are run through plagiarism detection software to determine its "originality." Really this means, "how much does what you write differ from sources on the Internet and what has previously been submitted to the institution?". Some instructors will allow you to upload your draft and check the originality report. The report will show what phrases and sentences in your paper match phrases and sentences in other sources. Usually you don't need to worry about sources that are in quotation marks because the software will assume that you are also citing them (though your instructor will notice if the citations are missing). This software is most valuable in seeing how well you paraphrase. If you see sentences highlighted or chunks of sentences highlighted, you will know you need to do a little more work to paraphrase your sources correctly. See below for a video about how to read an example report.

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

Video 10.8.1

Paraphrasing Check.Authored by: Erika Dyquisto. License: *All Rights Reserved*. License Terms: Standard YouTube License.

When to Cite

Any idea or fact taken from an outside source must be cited, in both the body of your paper and the references list. The only exceptions are facts or general statements that are common knowledge. Common-knowledge facts or general statements are commonly supported by and found in multiple sources. For example, a writer would not need to cite the statement that most breads, pastas, and cereals are high in carbohydrates; this is well known and well documented. However, if a writer explained in detail the differences among the chemical structures of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, a citation would be necessary. When in doubt, cite.

Fair Use

In recent years, issues related to the fair use of sources have been prevalent in popular culture. Recording artists, for example, may disagree about the extent to which one has the right to sample another's music. For academic purposes, however, the guidelines for fair use are reasonably straightforward.

Writers may quote from or paraphrase material from previously published works without formally obtaining the copyright holder's permission. Fair use means that the writer legitimately uses brief excerpts from source material to support and develop his or her own ideas. For instance, a columnist may excerpt a few sentences from a novel when writing a book review. However, quoting or paraphrasing another's work at excessive length, to the extent that large sections of the writing are unoriginal, is not fair use.

As he worked on his draft, Miguel was careful to cite his sources correctly and not to rely excessively on any one source. Occasionally, however, he caught himself quoting a source at great length. In those instances, he highlighted the paragraph in question so that he could go back to it later and revise. Read the example, along with Miguel's revision.

summary

Heinz found that "subjects in the low-carbohydrate group (30% carbohydrates; 40% protein, 30% fat) had a mean weight loss of 10 kg (22 lbs) over a 4-month period." These results were "noticeably better than results for subjects on a low-fat diet (45% carbohydrates, 35% protein, 20% fat)" whose average weight loss was only "7 kg (15.4 lbs) in the same period" (Heinz). From this, it can be concluded that "low-carbohydrate diets obtain more rapid results." Other researchers agree that "at least in the short term, patients following low-carbohydrate diets enjoy greater success" than those who follow alternative plans (Johnson and Crowe).

After reviewing the paragraph, Miguel realized that he had drifted into unoriginal writing. Most of the paragraph was taken verbatim from a single article. Although Miguel had enclosed the material in quotation marks, he knew it was not an appropriate way to use the research in his paper.

REVISED summary

Low-carbohydrate diets may indeed be superior to other diet plans for short-term weight loss. In a study comparing low-carbohydrate diets and low-fat diets, Heinz found that subjects who followed a low-carbohydrate plan (30% of total calories) for 4 months lost, on average, about 3 kilograms more than subjects who followed a low-fat diet for the same time. Heinz concluded that these plans yield quick results, an idea supported by a similar study conducted by Johnson and Crowe. What remains to be seen, however, is whether this initial success can be sustained for longer periods.

As Miguel revised the paragraph, he realized he did not need to quote these sources directly. Instead, he paraphrased their most important findings. He also made sure to include a topic sentence stating the main idea of the paragraph and a concluding sentence that transitioned to the next major topic in his essay. Even though he paraphrased his sources, he still cited them.

Writing at Work

Citing other people's work appropriately is just as important in the workplace as it is in school. If you need to consult outside sources to research a document you are creating, follow the general guidelines already discussed, as well as any industry-specific citation guidelines. For ore extensive use of others' work -- for instance, requesting permission to link to another company's website on your own corporate website--always follow your employer's established procedures.

Academic Integrity

The concepts and strategies discussed in this section connect to a larger issue—academic integrity. You maintain your integrity as a member of an academic community by representing your work and others' work honestly and by using other people's work only in legitimately accepted ways. It is a point of honor taken seriously in every academic discipline and career field.

Academic integrity violations have serious educational and professional consequences, as noted in the video above. Even when cheating and plagiarism go undetected, they still result in a student's failure to learn necessary research and writing skills. Students who are found guilty of academic integrity violations face consequences ranging from a failing grade to expulsion from the university. Employees may be fired for plagiarism and do irreparable damage to their professional reputation. In short, it is never worth the risk.

To test your understanding of how to use sources ethically, take SUNY Empire State College's Academic Integrity Quiz.

Exercise 1

Take SUNY Empire State College's Academic Integrity quiz, linked in the previous paragraph. After taking the quiz, discuss with a classmate what you knew and what you learned when taking a quiz. Together, write down two questions to ask your instructor in class about academic integrity.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing well is one of the most important skills you can learn in a college writing class. You will use it throughout your academic--and very likely your work--career. Not only do we paraphrase to convey information smoothly, in many academic and work fields, paraphrasing, rather than quoting, is the standard way of conveying other people's information. It is important to learn to paraphrase well in order to avoid plagiarizing and to be able to change other people's ideas into your "voice." Paraphrased passages are always cited, just as quotes are. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them. Paraphrasing is also a good writing technique to make ensure you understand your reading thoroughly. If you struggle to create a paraphrase, it may be that you don't fully understand the reading and should work more on that.

Writing a Paraphrase Properly

Make sure that you understand the original text that you intend to paraphrase. Rewrite that text at least twice, in your own words. It can help to read it, turn the reading over so you can't see it, and then write it in your own words. After the first rewriting, set the paraphrase aside for a short time. When you go back to it, you'll most likely see that you've tended to retain some of the original text's wording and sentence structure. On a second (or third, or fourth) rewriting, try to make the language and sentence structure your own, while retaining the meaning of the original text. If you find that the original text uses a key word or phrase that you don't want to rewrite, know that you can always include it in quotation marks within your paraphrase. Finally, make sure to attribute the paraphrase at the start (e.g., "According to...") and include a citation at the end. Your readers should be able to distinguish your own information from paraphrased information, and the attribution and citation signal the beginning and end of the paraphrase.

Paraphrasing Example

The original passage, from Benjamin Franklin's "Speech to the [Constitutional] Convention":

> Mr. President, I confess that I do not entirely approve of this Constitution at present; but, Sir, I am not sure I shall never approve it; for, having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller consideration, to change my opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise.

Here is the initial try at a paraphrase:

> Benjamin Franklin tells the president of the Constitutional Convention that he does **not entirely** approve of the Constitution at the **present** time, but that he is not sure **he will never approve it.** He points out that he has lived a long time, and in his experience there have been **many instances** when **better information of fuller consideration** of a topic have made him change his opinions **on important subjects** that he had originally thought to be correct. He points out that he finds himself more likely to doubt his own judgment the older he gets, and contrasts his knowledge of his own fallibility with other people's conviction of their infallibility.

The problem with this paraphrase is in the way that it reproduces distinctive phrasing, sentence structure, and ordering of ideas. Note that the bolded parts of the paragraph actually reproduce Franklin's wording exactly, and that the order of information in the paraphrase is essentially the same as in the original. Notice the end of the paraphrase also contains extra information that is not present in the original passage.

Now consider this **GOOD** revised version:

> Benjamin Franklin tells the president of the Constitutional Convention that although he is currently uncertain about the Constitution they have created, he may eventually acknowledge its effectiveness. This is due, he explains, to new information or a different understanding of similarly important topics that have cause him to change his mind in the past.

This paraphrase is strong because of the way that it captures the main ideas and important details of the original passage without reproducing phrasing or sentence structure too exactly. There are still similarities of phrasing and structure, but they deviate in notable ways from the phrasing and structure of the original passage. Also unlike the first paraphrase, this one does not include information not found in the original passage.

Paraphrase Checklist

Use the following checklist to help you create an appropriate paraphrase.

- Have you used your own words and sentence structures?
- Even though the wording is your own, have you carefully retained the meaning of the original text?
- Did you attribute the paraphrase at the start, using language in some way that explains that you're paraphrasing another's text? (e.g., "Smith states that...")
- Did you cite the paraphrase correctly at the end, using a standard citation format for in-text citations?
- Did you cite the paraphrased source in the Works Cited list at the end of the essay?

When you paraphrase material from a source, restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. It can help to not look at the source material while you do this.

Again, it is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing—that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer's own language and style. If you are writing a paper, and your instructor uses plagiarism detection software, consider asking your instructor if you can use the software to make sure your paraphrase is in your own words well enough. Passages that are not paraphrased well enough will have color highlighting in various places in the passage. This means that the paraphrase needs to be improved to be considered (and maybe that you need to understand the material better) an appropriate paraphrase.

In his draft, Miguel frequently paraphrased details from sources. At times, he needed to rewrite a sentence more than once to ensure he was paraphrasing ideas correctly. Read the passage from the website source, below. Then read Miguel's initial attempt at paraphrasing it, followed by the final version of his paraphrase.

source

Dieters nearly always get great results soon after they begin following a low-carbohydrate diet, but these results tend to taper off after the first few months, particularly because many dieters find it difficult to follow a low-carbohydrate diet plan consistently.

summary

People usually see encouraging outcomes shortly after they go on a low-carbohydrate diet, but their progress slows down after a short while, especially because most discover that it is a challenge to adhere to the diet strictly (Heinz, 2009).

After reviewing the paraphrased sentence, Miguel realized he was following the original source too closely. He did not want to quote the full passage verbatim, so he again attempted to restate the idea in his own style.

summary

Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009).

Exercise 2

Paraphrase the following passage from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) website, and ensure it follows the guidelines for a good paraphrase, above.

Origins of Earthquake Early Warning

Wherever people live with earthquakes, there is a desire for an early warning system that shaking is imminent. Even as far back as 1868, following a magnitude 6.8 earthquake on the Hayward fault, the San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin published an editorial proposing an early warning system. Calls echoing that desire continued throughout the 20th century in countries as far off as Iran, Italy, Japan, and Mexico.

In the United States, the first serious proposal for such a system came from USGS geophysicist Tom Heaton in 1985. Dr. Heaton's pioneering insight was ahead of its time, but the technology available in 1985 was not adequate for the system he proposed.

However, a few years later, other USGS scientists would temporarily use some of Heaton's innovative ideas after the Loma Prieta earthquake to try to safeguard the lives of rescue workers in the Bay Area. The intense shaking from the mainshock of Loma Prieta collapsed a 1.6-mile (2.5-kilometer) section of the Nimitz Freeway (referred to as the "Cypress Structure") along I-880 through Oakland. As rescuers worked to free people trapped in the rubble, the risk of aftershocks damaging the freeway further and injuring the workers became apparent. So USGS scientists set up a temporary system that radioed alerts to the workers whenever there was a significant aftershock that might shake the Nimitz. During its six months of operation, the system sent warnings for 12 earthquakes greater than magnitude 3.7.

Exercise 3

1. From a source related to your research topic, choose a 7- to 12-sentence long passage. Avoid introductory or concluding paragraphs, as these are often very general.

2. Paraphrase the original and include the citation in the text as well as in a Reference List. Add exercises text here.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Quoting Sources Directly

Most of the time, you will summarize or paraphrase source material instead of quoting directly. Doing so shows that you understand your research well enough to write about it confidently in your own words. However, direct quotes can be powerful when used sparingly and with purpose.

Quoting directly can sometimes help you make a point in a colorful way. If an author's words are especially vivid, memorable, or well phrased, quoting them may help hold your reader's interest. Or if you need exact words to be able to support your assertion, a quote can be an important type of evidence. Direct quotations from an interviewee or an eyewitness may help you personalize an issue for readers. And when you analyze primary sources, such as a historical speech or a work of literature, quoting extensively is often necessary to illustrate your points. These are valid reasons to use quotations.

Less experienced writers, however, sometimes overuse direct quotations in a research paper because it seems easier than paraphrasing. At best, this reduces the effectiveness of the quotations. At worst, it results in a paper that seems haphazardly pasted together from outside sources. Use quotations sparingly for greater impact.

When you do choose to quote directly from a source, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure you have transcribed the original statement accurately.
- Represent the author's ideas honestly. Quote enough of the original text to reflect the author's point accurately.
- Never use a stand-alone quotation. Always integrate the quoted material into your own sentence with a signal phrase that provides context.
- Use ellipses (...) if you need to omit a word or phrase. Use brackets [ ] if you need to replace or add a word or phrase to make the quote flow grammatically with your own sentence.
- Make sure any omissions or changed words do not alter the meaning of the original text. Omit or replace words only when absolutely necessary to shorten the text or to make it grammatically correct within your sentence.
- Remember to include correctly formatted citations that follow the assigned style guide.

Miguel interviewed a dietician as part of his research, and he decided to quote her words in his paper. Read an excerpt from the interview and Miguel's use of it, which follows.

Source

Personally, I don't really buy into all of the hype about low-carbohydrate miracle diets like Atkins and so on. Sure, for some people, they are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well.

summary

Registered dietician Dana Kwon (2010) admits, "Personally, I don't really buy into all of the hype....Sure, for some people, [low-carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well."

Notice how Miguel smoothly integrated the quoted material by starting the sentence with an introductory phrase. His use of ellipses and brackets did not change the source's meaning.

Documenting Source Material

Throughout the writing process, be scrupulous about documenting information taken from sources, whether they are quotes or paraphrases. When you document sources within your writing, they are called "in-text citations." The full documentation of all of your sources (each only entered once) is in the Bibliography or Works Cited page at the end of your paper. The purpose of doing so is twofold:

1. To give credit to other writers or researchers for their ideas
2. To allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired, which is part of the "conversation" or research.

Two of the most common documentation styles in academic writing are the Modern Language Association (MLA) style and the

American Psychological Association (APA) style. The latter of these is used for documenting most social sciences and educational research also. Since this book is for English classes, we will use MLA style. Do not feel like you need to memorize a style; rather, use the various guidebooks and resources that are out there to help you document your sources in your writing.

Citing Sources in the Body of Your Paper ("in-text" citations)

In-text citations document your sources within the body of your paper. These include two vital pieces of information: the author's name and the page number (if there is one) of the source material. Page numbers are necessary only when content has been directly quoted, not when it has been summarized or paraphrased.

Within a sentence, the in-text citation information may appear as part of your introduction to the material or as a parenthetical citation at the end of a sentence. Read the examples that follow.

summary

Leibowitz found that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar levels.

The introduction to the source material includes the author's name followed by the year of publication in parentheses.

summary

Low-carbohydrate diets often help subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar levels (Leibowitz).

The parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence includes the author's name and the page number (if any) with only a space in between. The period at the end of the sentence comes after the parentheses. If you are quoting a source, it should look like this:

quotation

Herman Melville, in his first volume of poetry, wrote, "it is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation" (1).

quotation

"It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation" (Melville 1).

Creating a List of References

Each of the sources you cite in the body text will appear in a references list at the end of your paper. While in-text citations provide the most basic information about the source, your references section will include additional publication details. In general, you will include the following information:

- The author's last name followed by his or her first (and sometimes middle) initial
- The year the source was published
- The source title
- For articles in periodicals, the full name of the periodical, along with the volume and issue number and the pages where the article appeared

Additional information may be included for different types of sources, such as online sources. For a detailed guide to APA or MLA citations, see Chapter 13. A sample reference list is provided with the final draft of Jorge's paper later in this chapter.

Incorporating Primary and Secondary Research

As you write your draft, be mindful of how you are using primary and secondary source material to support your points. Recall that primary sources present firsthand information. Secondary sources are one step removed from primary sources. They present a writer's analysis or interpretation of primary source materials. How you balance primary and secondary source material in your paper will depend on the topic and assignment.

Incorporating Primary Sources Effectively

Some types of research papers must use primary sources extensively to achieve their purpose. Any paper that analyzes a primary text or presents the writer's own experimental research falls in this category. Here are a few examples:

- A paper for a literature course analyzing several poems by Emily Dickinson
- A paper for a political science course comparing televised speeches delivered by two presidential candidates
- A paper for a communications course discussing gender biases in television commercials
- A paper for a business administration course that discusses the results of a survey the writer conducted with local businesses to gather information about their work-from-home and flex time policies
- A paper for an elementary education course that discusses the results of an experiment the writer conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different methods of mathematics instruction

For these types of papers, primary research is the main focus. If you are writing about a work (including non-print works, such as a movie or a painting), it is crucial to gather information and ideas from the original work, rather than relying solely on others' interpretations. And, of course, if you take the time to design and conduct your own field research, such as a survey, a series of interviews, or an experiment, you will want to discuss it in detail. For example, the interviews may provide interesting responses that you want to share with your reader.

You are already familiar with incorporating quotations and paraphrases from primary sources that people other than yourself have produced. But you may not be familiar with how to incorporate your own primary research. When Miguel was writing his paper, he decided to give a survey to people he knew about whether and why people the author knew participated in low-carb diets. he also asked questions to determine how effective they were. When gathering your own data like this, it is best to summarize the data that you found before writing about it. In other words, you must analyze the data you gathered and summarize it. You then refer to your overall findings. To incorporate his findings, Miguel wrote:

> Survey data show that not many people seem to be committed to staying on a low-carb diet, as -- after only a week -- most survey respondents had already given up on the diet (Ramirez).

Note that Miguel cited his own last name when quoting his own research. That's really the only difference between incorporating a primary source that you collected versus primary research that someone else said.

Incorporating Secondary Sources Effectively

For some assignments, it makes sense to rely more on secondary sources than primary sources. If you are not analyzing a text or conducting your own field research, you will need to use secondary sources extensively.

As much as possible, use secondary sources that are closely linked to primary research, such as a journal article presenting the results of the authors' scientific study or a book that cites interviews and case studies. These sources are more reliable and add more value to your paper than sources that are further removed from primary research. For instance, a popular magazine article on junk-food addiction might be several steps removed from the original scientific study on which it is loosely based. As a result, the article may distort, sensationalize, or misinterpret the scientists' findings.

Even if your paper is largely based on primary sources, you may use secondary sources to develop your ideas. For instance, an analysis of Alfred Hitchcock's films would focus on the films themselves as a primary source, but might also cite commentary from critics. A paper that presents an original experiment would include some discussion of similar prior research in the field.

Miguel knew he did not have the time, resources, or experience needed to conduct original experimental research for his paper other than a little additional complimentary research. Because he was relying on secondary sources to support his ideas, he made a point of citing sources that were not far removed from primary research.

Tip

Some sources could be considered primary or secondary sources, depending on the writer's purpose for using them. For instance, if a writer's purpose is to inform readers about how the No Child Left Behind legislation has affected elementary education, 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 the No Child Left Behind legislation. 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.

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Answers

Exercise 3

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10.9: Developing a Final Draft of a Research Paper

Given all the time and effort you have put into your research project, you will want to make sure that your final draft represents your best work. This requires taking the time to revise and edit your paper carefully.

You may feel like you need a break from your paper before you revise and edit it. That is understandable—but leave yourself with enough time to complete this important stage of the writing process. In this section, you will learn the following specific strategies that are useful for revising and editing a research paper:

- How to evaluate and improve the overall organization and cohesion
- How to maintain an appropriate style and tone
- How to use checklists to identify and correct any errors in language, citations, and formatting

Revising Your Paper: Organization and Cohesion

When writing a research paper, it is easy to become overly focused on editorial details, such as the proper format for bibliographical entries. These details do matter. However, before you begin to address them, it is important to spend time reviewing and revising the content of the paper. It is also important to revise your content before editing for word choice and tone so that you only have to complete that more detailed level of editing once.

A good research paper is both organized and cohesive. Organization means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. Cohesion means that the elements of your paper work together smoothly and naturally. In a cohesive research paper, information from research is seamlessly integrated with the writer's ideas.

Revise to Improve Organization

When you revise to improve organization, you look at the flow of ideas throughout the essay as a whole and within individual paragraphs. You check to see that your essay moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion, and that each section reinforces your thesis. You also should make sure the transitions, or logical connections, between one paragraph and the next -- and especially one section and the next -- are clear. Use the following checklist to help you, but be sure the revise at the organizational level before you revise at the paragraph level.

Checklist

Revision: Organization

At the essay level

- Does my introduction proceed clearly from the opening to the thesis?
- Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea that relates to the thesis?
- Do the main ideas in the body paragraphs flow in a logical order? Is each paragraph connected to the one before it?
- Do I need to add or revise topic sentences or transitions to make the overall flow of ideas clearer?
- Does my conclusion summarize my main ideas and revisit my thesis?

At the paragraph level

- Does the topic sentence clearly state the main idea?
- Do the details in the paragraph relate to the main idea?
- Do I need to recast any sentences or add transition words or sentences to improve the flow of sentences? See cohesion for more specifics about revising for this.

Exercise 1

To help you decide whether your essay is organized correctly, try the low-tech way or seeing what paragraph organization works best. It can be especially cumbersome to reorganize paragraphs on a computer, so sometimes doing this on paper works better. Here are the steps:

1. Print out your paper one-sided. Add in spaces between paragraphs so that no paragraphs are split between two pages.

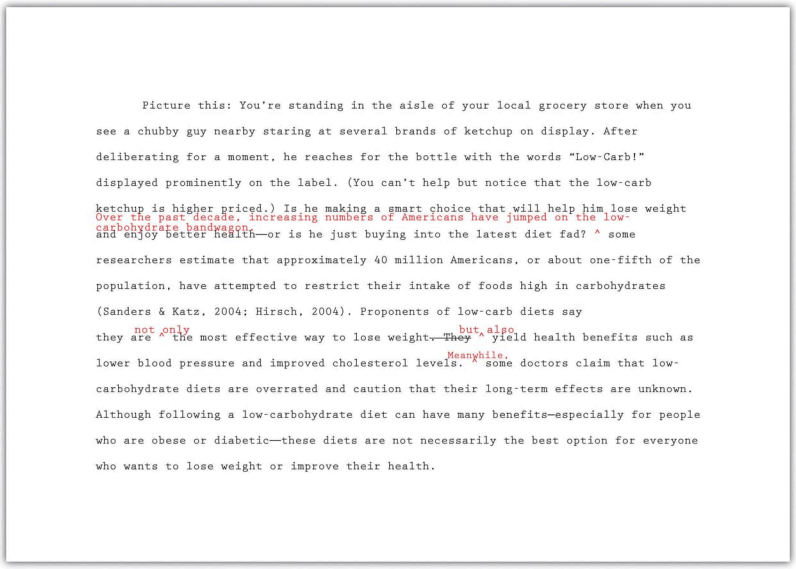
2. Cut apart your paragraphs (but keep each paragraph together).

3. Give the cut-apart paragraphs to a friend, and see if they can figure out which order they should go in. If they decide it goes in the order you already have your paper in, your paper is probably organized well already. If they cannot figure out the order, ask them to explain to you which paragraphs they are unsure about. This should give you a clue about where you should reorganize your paragraphs, if transitions need to be added, or if there is a missing chunk of information that should be developed to improve the overall cohesion of the paper.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Revise to Improve Paragrah Cohesion

In a research paper, problems with cohesion usually occur when a writer has trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer's point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect. Use the next checklist to review your essay for paragraph cohesion. Miguel did this in the introductory paragraph of his research paper:



Picture this: You're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carbohydrate bandwagon, and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? ^ some researchers estimate that approximately 40 million Americans, or about one-fifth of the population, have attempted to restrict their intake of foods high in carbohydrates (Sanders & Katz, 2004; Hirsch, 2004). Proponents of low-carb diets say not only they are ^ the most effective way to lose weight. ~~They~~ but also ^ yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, ^ some doctors claim that low-carbohydrate diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown. Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can have many benefits—especially for people who are obese or diabetic—these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

Tip

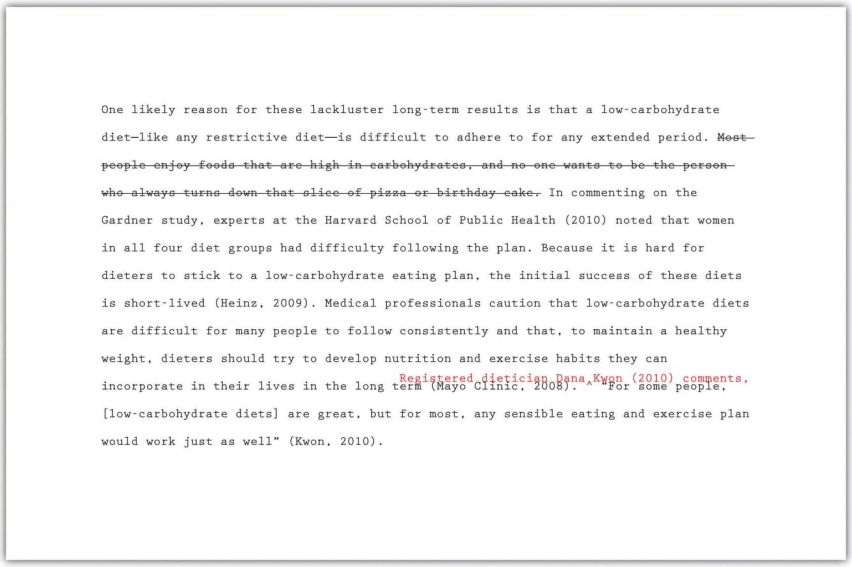
Writers choose transitions carefully to show the relationships between ideas—for instance, to make a comparison or elaborate on a point with examples. Make sure your transitions suit your purpose and avoid overusing the same ones.

Checklist

Revision: Cohesion

- Does the opening of the paper clearly connect to the broader topic and thesis? Make sure entertaining quotes 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? Quotations should never stand alone in a paragraph.
- 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? Make sure any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion are clearly linked to earlier material.

As Miguel reread his draft, he looked to see how the different pieces fit together to prove his thesis. He realized that some of his supporting information needed to be integrated more carefully and decided to omit some details entirely. Read the following paragraph, first without Miguel's revisions and then with them.



One likely reason for these lackluster long-term results is that a low-carbohydrate diet—like any restrictive diet—is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. ~~Most people enjoy foods that are high in carbohydrates, and no one wants to be the person who always turns down that slice of pizza or birthday cake.~~ In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health (2010) noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009). Medical professionals caution that low-carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo Clinic, 2008). Registered dietician Dana Kwon (2010) comments, "For some people, [low-carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well" (Kwon, 2010).

Figure: Miguel decided that his comment about pizza and birthday cake came across as subjective and was not necessary to make his point, so he deleted it. He also realized that the quotation at the end of the paragraph was awkward and ineffective. How would his readers know who Kwon was or why her opinion should be taken seriously? Adding an introductory phrase helped Miguel integrate this quotation smoothly and establish the credibility of his source.

Exercise 2

Follow these steps to begin revising your paper to improve cohesion.

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper, or work with your printout from the first exercise on this page.
2. Read the body paragraphs of your paper first. Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, ask yourself what purpose this information serves. Check that it helps support a point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph.
3. Be sure there is a direct connection between the idea in the sentence before the quote or paraphrase, as well as between the idea in the quote or paraphrase and the sentence that comes after it.
4. Identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete.
5. Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources.
6. Skim the body paragraphs once more, looking for any paragraphs that seem packed with citations. Review these paragraphs carefully for cohesion.
7. Review your introduction and conclusion. Make sure the information presented connects directly with ideas in the body of the paper.
8. Revise the places you identified in your paper to improve cohesion.

Collaboration

Exchange papers with a classmate. On the classmate's paper, identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete. Also, note any areas that would benefit from clarification or a clearer connection. Return and compare notes.

Writing at Work

Understanding cohesion can also benefit you in the workplace, especially when you have to write and deliver a presentation. Speakers sometimes rely on cute graphics or funny quotations to hold their audience's attention. If you choose to use these elements, make sure they work well with the substantive content of your presentation. For example, if you are asked to give a financial presentation, and the financial report shows that the company lost money, funny illustrations would not be relevant or appropriate for the presentation.

Using a Consistent Style and Tone

Once you are certain that the content of your paper fulfills your purpose, you can begin revising to improve style and tone. Style refers to the way you use language as a writer—the sentence structures you use and the word choices you make. Tone is the attitude toward your subject and audience that you convey through your word choice. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your paper, or how you come across to readers.

Determining an Appropriate Style and Tone

Although accepted writing styles will vary within different disciplines, the underlying goal is the same—to come across to your readers as a knowledgeable, authoritative guide. Writing about research is like being a tour guide who walks readers through a topic. A stuffy, overly formal tour guide can make readers feel put off or intimidated. Too much informality or humor can make readers wonder whether the tour guide really knows what he or she is talking about. Extreme or emotionally charged language comes across as unbalanced or biased.

YouTube Video

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Video 10.9.1

- Editing for Register and Tone. **Authored by:** Dr. Satu Manninen. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

To help prevent being overly formal or informal, determine an appropriate style and tone at the beginning of the research process. Consider your topic and audience because these can help dictate style and tone. For example, a paper on new breakthroughs in cancer research should be more formal than a paper on ways to get a good night's sleep, partly because the audiences are likely different.

A strong research paper comes across as straightforward, appropriately academic, and serious. It is generally best to avoid writing in the first or second person, as this can make your paper seem overly subjective and opinion based. Use the next checklist on style to review your paper for other issues that affect style and tone. You can check for consistency at the end of the writing process. Checking for consistency is discussed later in this section.

Checklist

Style

- My paper avoids excessive wordiness.
- My sentences are varied in length and structure.
- I have generally avoided using first-person pronouns, such as "I," and definitely avoided the second person, "you."
- I have used the active voice whenever possible.
- I have defined specialized terms that might be unfamiliar to readers.
- I have used clear, straightforward language whenever possible and avoided unnecessary jargon.
- My paper states my point of view using a balanced tone—neither too indecisive nor too forceful.
- I have used the simple present tense when referring to what other people did in their research.

Word Choice

Note that word choice is an especially important aspect of style. In addition to checking the points noted on the above Checklist, review your paper to make sure your language is precise, conveys no unintended connotations, and is free of biases. Here are some of the points to check for:

- Vague or imprecise terms
- Slang
- Repetition of the same phrases (“Smith states…, Jones states…”) to introduce quoted and paraphrased material (For a full list of strong verbs to use with in-text quotations, see Chapter 11.)
- Exclusive use of masculine pronouns or awkward use of *he* or *she*
- Use of language with negative connotations, such as *haughty* or *ridiculous*
- Use of outdated or offensive terms to refer to specific ethnic, racial, or religious groups

Tip:

Using plural nouns and pronouns or recasting a sentence can help you keep your language gender inclusive while avoiding awkwardness. Consider the following examples:

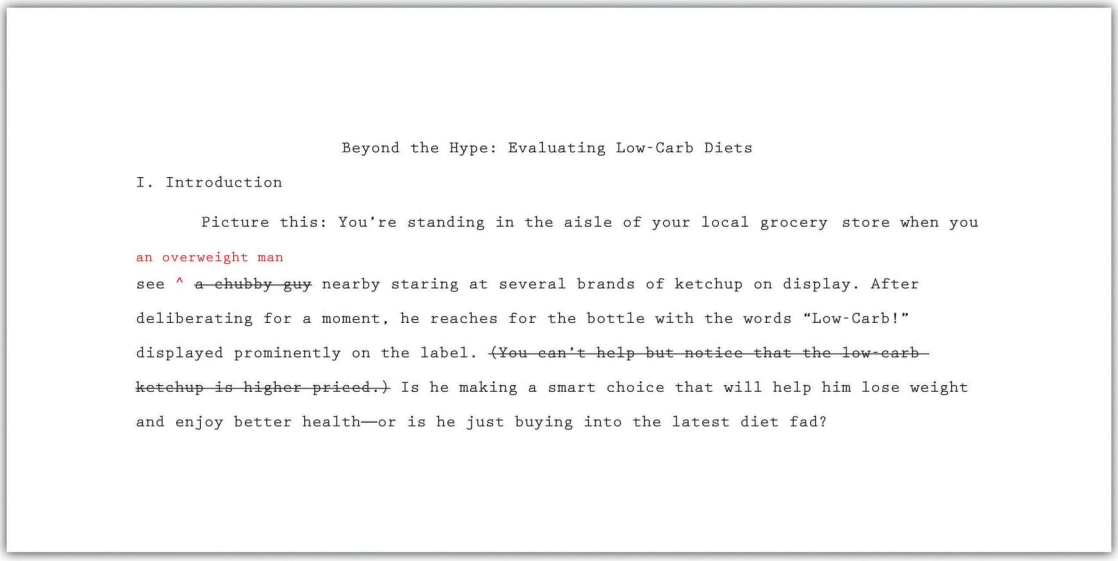
- **Gender-biased:** When a writer cites a source in the body of his paper, he must list it on his references page.
- **Awkward:** When a writer cites a source in the body of his or her paper, he or she must list it on his or her references page.
- **Inclusive:** Writers must list any sources cited in the body of their paper on the references page

Keeping Your Style Consistent

As you revise your paper, make sure your style is consistent throughout. Look for instances where a word, phrase, or sentence just does not seem to fit with the rest of the writing. It is best to reread for style after you have completed the other revisions so that you are not distracted by any larger content issues. Revising strategies you can use include the following:

- **Read your paper aloud.** Sometimes your ears catch inconsistencies that your eyes miss.
- **Share your paper with another reader whom you trust to give you honest feedback.** It is often difficult to evaluate one’s own style objectively—especially in the final phase of a challenging writing project. Another reader may be more likely to notice instances of wordiness, confusing language, or other issues that affect style and tone.
- **Line-edit your paper slowly, sentence by sentence.** You may even wish to use a sheet of paper to cover everything on the page except the paragraph you are editing—that forces you to read slowly and carefully. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

On reviewing his paper, Miguel found that he had generally used an appropriately academic style and tone. However, he noticed one glaring exception—his first paragraph. He realized there were places where his overly informal writing could come across as unserious or, worse, disparaging. Revising his word choice and omitting a humorous aside helped Miguel maintain a consistent tone. Read his revisions.



Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

I. Introduction

Picture this: You're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see ^ ~~a chubby guy~~ an overweight man nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. ~~(You can't help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.)~~ Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?

Exercise 3

Using the "Style" checklist, line-edit your paper. You may use either of these techniques:

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper, or work with your printout from the previous exercise. Read it line by line. Check for the issues noted on the "Style" checklist, as well as any other aspects of your writing style you or your instructor have previously identified as areas for improvement. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.
2. If you prefer to work with an electronic document, use the menu options in your word-processing program to enlarge the text to 150 or 200 percent of the original size. Make sure the type is large enough that you can focus on only one paragraph at a time. Read the paper line by line as described in step 1. Highlight any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

Proofreading Your Paper

The following video will give an overview of some proofreading strategies.

YouTube Video

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Video 10.9.1

Proofreading strategies. **Authored by:** Coventry University, Centre for Academic Writing. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

After revising your paper to address problems in content or style, you will complete one final editorial review. Perhaps you already have caught and corrected minor mistakes during previous revisions. Nevertheless, give your draft a final edit to make sure it is error-free. Your final edit should focus on two broad areas:

1. Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, and spelling
2. Errors in citing and formatting sources

For in-depth information on these two topics, see Chapter 11, Chapter 12 and Chapter 13.

Given how much work you have put into your research paper, you will want to check for any errors that could distract or confuse your readers. Using the spell-checking feature in your word-processing program can be helpful—but this should not replace a full, careful review of your document. Be sure to check for any errors that may have come up frequently for you in the past. Grammar check can also sometimes be helpful, but they may not catch grammar errors in the more complicated sentences that college students write. Be sure to do your own proofreading; however, if you want to get someone else's eyes, ask them to either circle or underline where they see a problem (but not fix it), or write an "x" next to the line with the proofreading mistake. It is then up to you to find the actual mistake. Either way, you should figure out what the mistake is and fix it yourself.

Writing at Work

Proofreading well is essential at many workplaces. Proofreading mistakes -- even in short emails -- can give the impression that you do not pay attention to detail or that you are not knowledable. Even though it is not necessarily true that writing is a basic skill, many people in the workplace view it as such, so proofreading is a skill you should have under control when you are in the workpplace so that people don't get the wrong impression of you.

Checking Citations and Formatting

When editing a research paper, it is also important to check that you have cited sources properly and formatted your document according to the specified guidelines. There are two reasons for this. First and foremost, citing sources correctly ensures that you have given proper credit to other people for ideas and information that helped you in your work. Second, using correct formatting establishes your paper as one student's contribution to the work developed by and and the conversation in a larger academic community.

Checklist

Citations and Formatting

- Within the body of my paper, each fact or idea taken from a source (whether quoted of paraphrased) is credited to the correct source.
- Each in-text citation includes the source author's name (or, where applicable, the organization name or source title) and page number (if there is one -- MLA format). I have used the correct format of in-text and parenthetical citations.
- Each source cited in the body of my paper has a corresponding entry in the references section of my paper.
- My references section includes a centered heading that says "Works Cited" and double-spaced, alphabetized entries.
- Each entry in my references section is indented on the second line and all subsequent lines (hanging indent).
- Each entry in my references section includes all the necessary information for that source type, in the correct sequence and format.
- The margins of my paper are set at one inch. Text is double spaced and set in a standard 12-point font.

For detailed guidelines on APA and MLA citation and formatting, see Chapter 13.

Writing at Work

Following APA or MLA citation and formatting guidelines may require time and effort. However, it is good practice for learning how to follow accepted conventions in any professional field. Many large corporations create a style manual with guidelines for editing and formatting documents produced by that corporation. Employees follow the style manual when creating internal documents and documents for publication.

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Answers

Exercise 1

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10.10: Key Takeaways

- Research writing is a conversation, and your job is to find your place in that conversation and go into it with an open mind, without a pre-decided point of view.
- Research is a process, and you may need to even go find more information after you've already begun writing.
- Research is a skill used commonly at work and requires project management skills.
- Anticipate problems and plan for alternate ways to get your work done.
- When drafting, work on one topic at a time.
- A writer's use of primary and secondary sources is determined by the topic and purpose of the research. Sources used may include print sources, such as books and journals; electronic sources, such as websites and articles retrieved from databases; and human sources of information, such as interviews.
- Strategies that help writers locate sources efficiently include conducting effective keyword searches, understanding how to use online catalogs and databases, using strategies to narrow web search results, and consulting reference librarians.
- In their notes, effective writers record organized, complete, accurate information. This includes bibliographic information about each source as well as summarized, paraphrased, or quoted information from the source.
- It's a good idea to summarize each source, write down relevant paraphrases for ideas that can be expressed in your own words, and write down quotations for those ideas where the exact words of the author really matter.
- Annotate your sources and record your thoughts and reactions to ideas or sentences you find particularly engaging.
- It is important for writers to revisit their research questions and working thesis as they transition from the research phase to the writing phase of a project. Usually, the working thesis will need at least minor adjustments. The research question may occasionally need to be revised as well.
- To organize a research paper, writers choose a structure that is appropriate for the topic and purpose. Longer papers may make use of more than one structure.
- Direct quotations should be used sparingly. Ellipses and brackets must be used to indicate words that were omitted or changed/added for conciseness or grammatical correctness.
- Plagiarism has serious academic and professional consequences. To avoid accidental plagiarism, keep research materials organized, understand guidelines for fair use and appropriate citation of sources, and review the paper to make sure these guidelines are followed.
- In a cohesive research paper, the elements of the paper work together smoothly and naturally. When revising a research paper, evaluate its cohesion. In particular, check that information from research is smoothly integrated with your ideas.
- An effective research paper uses a style and tone that are appropriately academic and serious. When revising a research paper, check that the style and tone are consistent throughout.

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11: CLARITY, CONCISENESS, AND STYLE

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11.1: Academic Style

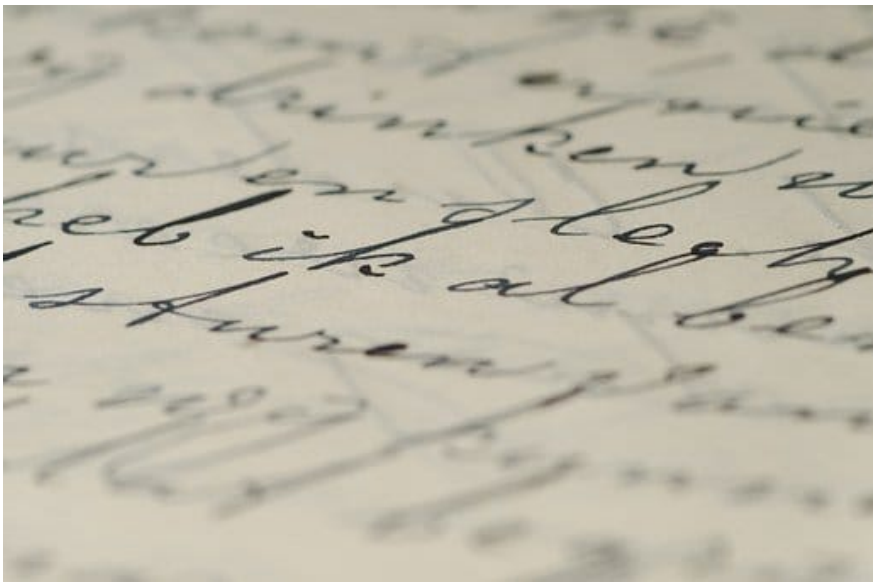

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Academic Style

Many students enter their first year college reading-writing course thinking that academic style means using "big words," never using I, and making their sentences as long as possible. Student may have read academic readings in which the style sounded "overblown" or wordy. A lot of academic writing exists that does read this way, but such writing is not necessarily *good* academic writing. Some writers come into college already writing in what they feel is academic writing style, and others don't know how to write in that way, but think that is the goal.

In reality, academic style involves using clear, specific word choice and sentence constructions (including active voice as much as possible); staying focused on the topic at hand; generally using third person voice to build your argument and incorporate your sources; and generally avoiding personal experience or discussing your process of writing the paper. Some of these parts of academic style are discussed elsewhere in this e-book (see "Word Choice"). Here, we will focus on some of the sentence level conventions that academic style involves.

Example of Good Academic Style

The following example by Professor Peter Bowler from publicdomainreview.org demonstrates good academic style in humanities writing:

> H. G. Wells worried constantly about the future of humanity. While he hoped for progress in human affairs, he was only too well aware that it was not inevitable and might not be sustained. Throughout his career he celebrated the technological developments that were revolutionizing life but feared they might lead to eventual degeneration or, as came to pass in 1914, a catastrophic war. He was also aware that there were disagreements over what would actually count as progress. Providing everyone with the benefits of modern industry might not be enough, especially as continued technological innovation would require the constant remodeling of society. Progressive steps introducing entirely new functions were episodic, open-ended and unpredictable, in both biological and social evolution. These uncertainties were compounded by a realization that, where technological innovation was concerned, it was virtually impossible to predict future inventions or what their long-term consequences might be. Even if progress continued, it would be much more open-ended than advocates of the traditional idea of progress had imagined.
>
> For Wells the most basic level of uncertainty arose from the fear that the human race might not sustain its current rate of development. In his 1895 story “The Time Machine” he imagined his time traveler projected through eras of future progress:

> "I saw great and splendid architecture rising about me, more massive than any buildings of our time, and yet, as it seemed, built of glimmer and mist" (27). But the time traveler ends up in a world brought down by social division and degeneration. The brutal Morlocks are the descendants of the industrial workers, while the childlike Eloi are the remnants of the leisured upper classes. This prediction was based on his zoologist friend E. Ray Lankester's extension of the Darwinian theory. Lankester argued that because evolution works by adapting populations to their environment, progress is not inevitable and any species that adapts itself to a less active and hence less challenging way of life will degenerate (Lankester 127 and 198-202). Here was the model for a more complex vision of progress in which any advance would depend on the circumstances of the time and could not be predicted on the basis of previous trends.

While a couple of uses of the passive voice are present (paragraph 1, sentence 7 and paragraph 2, sentence 4), the uses are acceptable because the author wanted to focus on the object of the sentences and needed them to cohere well with the previous sentences. However, all of the other sentences are in active voice.

The paragraphs focus on the topic at hand and what others say about topic. The author uses many types of descriptive phrases and clauses, uses specific and meaningful word choice, and varies the sentence length depending on what he wants to empahsize. In addition, when writing about an event within a book, he uses simple present tense ("But the time traveler ends up in a world brought down by social division and degeneration.")

Some Academic Style Recommendations

What to Avoid

1. Avoid using "I" unless writing about personal experience or actively comparing your opinion to another author's.

Do not write: *I think greed is the principal cause of Americans' debt.*

Do write: Greed is the principal cause of Americans' debt.

(It will be clear that the opinion is yours simply by the fact that you are writing the paper. If the opinion is someone else's, say whose opinion it is. Otherwise, the focus will move from the topic you are writing about to you.)

2. Avoid "you" (or "your" or "yours") **unless you are seeking to address the reader directly.**

Do not write: *If you shop too much, you can become addicted.*

Do write: People who shop too much can become addicted.

Your audience is a general academic audience, and one's purpose in writing a paper is not generally to give personal advice. "You" addresses one person, but an academic essay's audience is multiple people.

3. Avoid (unanswered) questions, especially if they occur where you should be writing analysis.

Do not write: *How can children know how to resist advertising?*

Do write: Children do not have the maturity to resist advertising.

Just say what you mean to say because questions can prevent a writer from getting their point across with precision. It is occasionally acceptable to use a question as a hook or transition, but avoid using them more than once or twice in an essay.

4. Avoid using casual language or slang unless it contributes to the effect you want.

Do not write: *The author talks about how corporations pollute.*

Do write: The author explains that, without regulation, corporations pollute.

Do not write: The authors describe *this* family, the Joneses...

Do write: The authors describe a family, the Joneses... casual tone might undermine your authority.

A casual tone may undermine your authority and is not the usual accepted tone for academic writing.

5. Avoid sweeping, obvious, vague, or clichéd phrases and statements:

- Nowadays
- In today's society
- This proves that no one cares about anyone but himself.
- Everyone is addicted to shopping.
- Pollution affects everyone and everything.
- Pollution must end today or everyone will die soon.
- In society, many things happen that are connected to each other.

To correct these kinds of statements, refine your thinking and decide what specifically you mean – and can reasonably claim.

What to Do

1. Use simple present verb tense, rather than past tense, when writing about what you read.

Do not write: The author **wrote** about the need to reduce vaping among people of all ages.

Write: The author **writes** about the need to reduce vaping among people of all ages.

Using simple present tense is academic convention because of the idea that once something is written on paper (or recorded on film or video), it always exists and lives in an "eternal present."

2. Vary your sentence length.

Review the example at the top of the page and notice how having short sentences after long sentences helps to keep your attention and move you forward while you read.

3. Use strong, descriptive words -- especially verbs.

Avoid weak verbs that no longer have much meaning, such as "get," "have", "being," "make," and their variants. Also try to avoid verbs that have a preposition (but no prepositional phrase) after them.

Do not write: I **ate up** my food quickly.

Do write: I **gobbled** my food.

Depending on your meaning, the following table includes some stronger words for these notoriously weak verbs.

Get	Have (as a main verb)	Be(ing)	Make
obtain	possess	exist	cause
understand	keep	am	require
fetch	own	feel	produce
receive	contract (as a disease)	are	create

4. Write with focused sentence; this includes active voice.

- Use active voice wherever possible. The situations in which using passive voice is acceptable are when:
- A writer needs to begin with the object of the sentence so that the sentence flows well from the previous sentence (cohesion)
- A writer needs to describe a process they followed (such as might appear in the methodology section of a scientific research paper or lab report)
- The subject or agent of the sentence is unknown.Other guidelines for writing focused sentences can be found here.

The following videos can reinforce what you just read. While they refer to APA style, all of the tips here are relevant for MLA also.

YouTube Video

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Video 11.1.1

YouTube Video

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Video 11.1.1

Writing in an Academic Style Part 1 and 2. **Authored by:** JMU Writing Center. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Practice with Academic Style

Exercise 1

Rewrite these sentences in a clear, academic style using the above guidelines.

1. You will never be happy if you don't spend time with your friends and family.
2. How can communities regulate corporations without the help of the government?
3. In my opinion, I think that people nowadays are materialistic.
4. There was this guy who was talking in this book called *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs* – I think his name was Arne – saying that women only entered the workforce in the 70s because men were deadbeat earners.
5. Who do you think will make you happy if not yourself?
6. There are all these advertisements that try to get kids to buy things.
7. I believe that advertising damages women.
8. The authors of "Iron Maiden" say that you will have lower self-esteem if you read too many fashion magazines.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following paragraph in a clear, academic style using the above guidelines.

> Food stamps have recently been proposed to be restricted by the U.S. government. To write this paper, I examine five sources that discussed the topic of food stamps. All of the sources look at the topic of food stamps from the federal level, rather than from the perspective of a particular state. Almost all of the sources acknowledge that some people will no longer receive food stamps. In fact, only those with great need could receive help! Food banks will all be inundated with new people who need help, or children will go hungry. And hungry children don't learn as well as those who have had a good breakfast. Food stamps should not be restricted to only the most needy because, in our gig-based economy, many people go hungry some of the time. It's just offloading the problem onto the private sector.

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11.2: Punctuation and Style

Parentheses, Dashes, and Hyphens

The following video explains how to work with parentheses and dashes.

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Video 11.2.1

Parentheses and Dashes. **Authored by:** Warner JordanEducation. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Parentheses

Parentheses ( ) are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete the parentheses and any text within them. Words in parentheses can also indicate thoughts that writers are thinking to themselves when writing dialog. They can also be used to distinguish asides that are less important to the meaning of a sentence than descriptive words surrounded by commas might be.

Attack of the Killer Potatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen **(**so far**)**.

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious **(**and nutritious**)** foods I have ever tasted!

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentence by adding parentheses. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend I am?

2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar unless you don't like sushi.

3. I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.

4. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.

5. Has anyone besides me read the assignment?

6. Please be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

Dashes

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two

dashes, or use just one dash if the part of the sentence that is set off also ends the sentence. To create a dash in Microsoft Word or Google Docs, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?
2. I don't know I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work of the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Hyphens

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways.

Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words (usually adjectives) that work together to form a single description.

The fifty-five-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as her younger opponents.

My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit-forming.

My study group focused on preparing for the mid-year review.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

My supervisor was concerned that the team meet-

ing would conflict with the client meeting.

Figure: Unsplash

Note of Caution: Phrases set apart with parentheses or dashes interrupt the flow of the sentence. Use them sparingly, and be careful not to interrupt yourself to much with such asides. It can make your writing harder to read. However, they can also add style by allowing your voice to shine through by creating pacing and emphasis.

Exercise 3

Using what you learned in this chapter, correct the punctuation errors and fix the style in the following sentences.

a. On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever and I've known her for fifteen years.

b. All the details were perfect in my opinion.

c. Everyone danced at the wedding except my mother.

d. It was to be expected she just had hip surgery.

e. The groom danced with his new mother in law.

f. It was a spectacular, fun filled day for everyone.

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11.3: Capitalization

Capitalization

The following are some capitalization rules. You probably know most of them, but it's very possible you may be unclear on a couple of them.

- Always capitalize the first letter of a sentence. This gives a visual signal to your reader that a new idea is beginning.
- Always capitalize "I" when referring to yourself. Don't fall into the texting lowercase "i" habit.
- Always capitalize proper nouns. This may be a little trickier than you think. See this video for some tips.

The following video will tell you more.

Free English Lesson -- Capitalization and Proper Nouns. **Authored by:** The Nardvark. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

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Video 11.3.1

Capitalize	Don't Capitalize
• Names of people • A particular river or mountain • Brands • Company/organization names • Days of the week • Months of the year • Street and square names • Departments of the government • Historical eras • Holidays • Institutions • Man-made structures • Geographical and geopolitical locations (countries, counties, etc.) • Landmarks • Planets when referred to as their name • Races, nationalities and tribes • Religions and names of deities • Books that are the basis of a religion • Special events and occasions • The genus of an organism	• Types of animals, unless it's named after a person or a place • Just the words river or mountain • Elements off the periodic table of elements (no exceptions) • Types of companies • Food, unless it's a brand name or has someone's name in it • Medical conditions, unless they are named after someone • Plants, vegetables, and fruits unless they are named after someone (and only capitalize the name) • Use of department and other generic terms without titles • Chemicals and minerals • Seasons and times of day • Heavenly bodies that aren't planets • The species of an organism

Note:

Capitalize adjectives when the adjective pertains to "X," and "X" is a proper noun. For instance, *French* refers to *France*, which is a proper noun. So *French* in *French fries* should be capitalized.

Writing at Work

When working with legal documents, capitalization rules differ from the standard. Defined terms may be capitalized throughout legal documents.

Exercise 1

Correct the capitalization errors in the following fictional story. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

lance worthington signed a Recording Contract with Capitol records on june 15, 2007. Despite selling two million copies of his Debut Album, nothing to lose, lance lost quite a bit as his tax returns from the irs revealed. lance did not think it was fair that the Record Company kept so much of his earnings, so he decided to hire robert bergman, a prominent music Attorney with a Shark-like reputation. bergman represented lance all the way to the supreme court, where lance won the case against capitol records. Lance worthington was instrumental in changing intellectual property rights and long standing Record Company practices. All artists and musicians can thank him for his brave stance against record companies. Lance subsequently formed his own independent record label called worthy records. worthy is now a successful Label based out of chicago, illinois, and its Artists have appeared on well known shows such as The tonight show and Saturday night live. Lance worthington is a model for success in the do-it-yourself World that has become the Music Industry.

Capitalization of Titles (Title Case)

Capitalization of titles can be confusing because we see this done in different ways (styles) in different publication.

The traditional method of capitalizing a title involves:

- Capitalizing the first letter of the first and last words in a title.
- Capitalizing the first letter of all words that aren't articles or coordinating conjunctions that are less than five letters.

The following video illustrates this with particular examples.

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Video 11.3.1

Capitalization Rules: Capitalization of a Title. **Authored by:** Union Test Prep. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Note:

Some style guides treat the title as a sentence and only capitalize the first word. This is not generally acceptable in college classes, however.

In particular, when you list the title on your Works Cited or Bibliography page, even if the original title used sentence case capitalization, change the capitalization to title case.

Exercise 2

Capitalize the following titles according to standard title case.

1. the song remains the same
2. enter the wu-tang (36 chambers)
3. the dna drug revolution
4. the curious incident of the dog in the night time
5. so long, and thanks for all the fish
6. if life's a bowl of cherries, what am i doing in the pits?

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11.4: Commonly Confused Words

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. And builders must use the right part for the job. If they try to use nuts and bolts where nails or screws are needed to hold together a building, the building may fall apart during the first earthquake. Just as builders need to use the right hardware, 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 everyday 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 that will improve your writing.

Vocabulary and the Reading-Writing Connection

Adults gain most of their vocabulary simply by reading. The best way to improve your vocabulary is to read a wide variety of texts at the reading level you are at or slightly above. This will expose you to a wider range of words than you might be exposed to if you read the same sort of texts all the time. And such reading needn't just be academic in nature. Reading magazines about various hobbies, and with a variety of focuses (business, economics, fashion) will expose you to a wider vocabulary.

Some people complain that while they read a variety of different kinds of texts, they just can't retain the new words they meet. XXXXX

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 see Chapter 12.

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Video 11.4.1

Commonly Misused & Confused Words -- Part 1. **Authored by:** Vocabulary TV. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

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 sound

  an airplane, **an** ocean, **an** igloo

- *And* (conjunction). Connects two or more words, phrases, or clauses 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

- My cousins **are** all tall and blonde.
- *Are* (linking verb). Use to create the right verb tense

We **are** thinking about going to the movies tonight.

- 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.

Capital, Capitol

- *Capital* (adjective). Means upper case or excellent

That is a **capital** idea!

Proper nouns begin with **capital** letters.

- *Capitol* (noun). The place where government is headquartered.

Sacramento is the **capitol** of California.

Its, It's

- *Its* (pronoun). A form of *it* that shows possession

  The butterfly flapped **its** wings.

- **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.

Lessen, Lesson

- *Lessen* (verb). Means to reduce

I will **lessen** the amount I spend on entertainment this month.

- *Lesson* (noun). Something that one is taught

The teacher taught the **lesson** about phonics to the kindergarteners.

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

- 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.

Patience, Patients

- *Patience* (noun). To wait without complaining

The driver showed **patience** while following the slow truck in front of him.

- *Patients* (plural noun). More than one person at the doctor's office or in the hospital.

The **patients** did not have to wait to see the doctor.

Principal, Principle

- *Principal* (noun or adjective). The highest level position or the most important something.

The **principal** component of a cup of tea is water.

The **principal** of the high school hired a new vice principal.

- *Principle* (noun). A philosophical point or fundamental truth

She argued about the ethical **principle.**

Quite, Quiet, Quit

- My work will require **quite** a lot of concentration.
- *Quiet* (adjective). Means not loud

  I need a **quiet** room to complete the assignments.

- *Quit* (verb). Means to stop or to end

  I will **quit** when I am hungry for dinner.

Right, Write

- *Right* (adjective). Means proper or correct

  When bowling, she practices the **right** form.

- *Right* (adjective). Also means the opposite of left

  The ball curved to the **right** and hit the last pin.

- *Write* (verb). Means to communicate on paper

  After the team members bowl, I will **write** down their scores.

Sea, See

- *Sea* (noun). A body of water slightly smaller than an ocean; a portion of an ocean that is partly surrounded by land

They set sail from the Adriatic **Sea.**

- See (verb). To use the sense of the eyes

I **see** all the flowers in the garden!

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 he brews the tea.

Suppose, Supposed

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to think or to consider

  I **suppose** I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe.

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to suggest

  Suppose we all split the cost of the dinner.

- *Supposed* (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose, meaning required or allowed

  She was **supposed** to create the menu.

Than, Then

- *Than* (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing

  Registered nurses require less schooling **than** doctors.

- *Then* (adverb). Means next or at a specific time

  Doctors first complete medical school and **then** obtain a residency.

Their, They're, There

- *Their* (pronoun). A form of *they* that shows possession

  The dog walker feeds **their** dogs everyday at two o'clock.

- **They're** the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.
- *There* (adverb). Indicates a particular place

  The dogs' bowls are over **there**, next to the pantry.

- *There* (pronoun). Indicates the presence of something

  There are more treats if the dogs behave.

Though, Tho

- *Tho* (not a word). This is shorthand but is not really a word.
- *Though* (subordinating conjuntion). Joins a less important idea to a more important idea

Though many people may disagree, I get excited before finals week.

Threw, Through

Till, Until

- *Till* (verb). Means to prepare soil for planting

The farmer **tilled** the soil before planting lettuce seed.

- *Until* (subordinating conjunction). Joins a clause that talks about something that happens before a certain time.

We can't go on vacation **until** we have turned in our work.

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* is the number after one. It describes how many.

  Two clowns squirted the elephants with water.

- 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.

- 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.

Vain, Vein

- *Vain* (adjective, noun compliment). Conceited, stuck on one's self.

The vain people couldn't stop admiring themselves in the mirror.

- *Vein* (noun). A cavity in the body through which blood flows that is smaller than an artery by larger than a capillary.

The nurse had to find a vein in my arm in order to draw some blood.

- *Vein* (noun). A metaphoric usage meaning "along those lines."

I will continue in that vein when I take over the acting role.

Who's, Whose

- **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** the girl with the unzipped book bag.

Tip: If you know you tend to confuse certain words, search for those words (the way you normally spell them) using the "find" feature in your word processing program. Then check to see if you have used and spelled that word correctly in the context you have written.

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.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by filling in the blank line with the correct homynym or frequently misspelled words.

1. Kevin asked me a serious question and _____ (than/then) interrupted me when I attempted to answer.

2. A hot compress will _____ (lessen, lesson) the pain of muscle cramps.

3. Ashley was not a graceful _____ (looser, loser) because she knocked her chair over and stormed off the basketball court.

4. (Accept, Except) _____ for A. J., we all had our tickets to the play.

5. I am _____ (threw, through) with this magazine, so you can read it if you like.

6. I don't care _____ (who's, whose) coming to the party and _____ (who's, whose) not.

7. Crystal could _____ (sea, see) the soaring hawk through her binoculars.

8. The _____ (principal, principle) gave a long-winded speech about peer pressure.

9. Dr. Fox nearly lost her _____(patience, patients) with one of her _____ (patience, patients).

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. **Do not rely on spell check** for commonly confused words. These are all words, and because word processing programs don't really understand meaning, they won't catch words that are correctly spelled but are used incorrectly.
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.

Writing at Work 11.4.1

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.

Consistently using the proper words will improve your communication and make a positive impression on your manager and colleagues.

Exercise 3

The following paragraph contains eleven errors. Find each misused word and correct it by adding or changing a word to 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.

Once you have found the errors, compare what you found with a classmate. If you disagree about any changes, bring up the question in class.

Exercise 4

Proofread the following paragraph and correct any commonly confused or misspelled words.

Grunge, or the Seattle sound, is a type of rock music that became quiet popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It began in Seattle, Washington. Grunge musicians rejected the dramatic an expensive stage productions that were trendy at the time. There music was striped down with an emphasis on distorted electric guitars. Grunge musicians did not ware makeup or sport extravagent hairstyles like many of the day's rock musicians and bands. Many grunge musicians would by they're clothes from secondhand stores. The lyrics too grunge songs were also quit different compared two what was populer at the time. Grunge lyrics are charecterized by dark or socially conscience themes. Grunge music is still admired today buy music lovers of all ages.

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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11.5: 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 free writing 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. The danger of being picky about your words as you draft (especially during your first draft) is that you may end up forgetting what you want to write while you search for that perfect word. This can cripple your writing process and create writer's block. One way to make sure that -- at some point in your writing process -- that you do choose the exact word that you mean is to place question marks "?" by the word you can't think of or that you think you might want to change, and then continue to draft. Once you are ready to edit your work at the sentence level (all of your content development and organization are complete) then you can search for question marks to find the places where you wanted to consider the word choice more carefully. Also, you may receive feedback from readers about word choice they find confusing or that you may want to re-consider.

Use the following strategies to help you with your word choice. 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 and thesauruses to help them write better. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries and thesauruses.

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 and see which of the preceding information you can identify:

Definition

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.

Definition

precocious *adj*, *She's such a precocious little girl!*: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.

Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

Exercise 1

Choose the correct synonym.

a. lenient _____ (relaxed, callous)

b. abandon _____ (vacate, deceive)

c. berate _____ (criticize, encourage)

d. experienced _____ (callow, matured)

e. spiteful _____ (malevolent, mellow)

f. tame _____ (subdued, wild)

g. tasty _____ (savory, bland)

h. banal _____ (common, interesting)

i. contradict _____ (deny, revolt)

j. vain _____ (boastful, simple)

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. Using a thesaurus can be difficult sometimes if one doesn't know the connotations of a word because you risk using a word in the wrong way. If you aren't sure whether you are using a word with the right connotation, look up the word in sentences on the internet and see how its used in context. You can also ask your instructor or a tutor but if you are not sure about the connotation of a word, do a little research to figure it out.

The three following words (scrawny, skinny, and lean) all describe someone who weighs less than average, but they all have different connotations.

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 or meat, very thin or narrow.
- **Word used in a sentence: Skinny** jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.

- **Connotation:** (Neutral) Based on cultural and personal impressions of what it means to be skinny, the reader may have positive or negative 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. This video explains it more.

YouTube Video

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Video 11.5.1

Word Choice. **Authored by:** Prof Myhen. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Exercise 2

In each of the following word sets, 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.

1. curious, nosy, interested
2. lazy, relaxed, slow
3. courageous, foolhardy, assured
4. new, newfangled, modern
5. mansion, shack, residence
6. spinster, unmarried woman, career woman
7. giggle, laugh, cackle
8. boring, routine, prosaic
9. noted, notorious, famous
10. assertive, confident, pushy

Positive	Negative	Neutral

Positive	Negative	Neutral

Avoiding Slang

Hey guys, let' learn about slang and other cool stuff like that! It will be awesome, trust me. This section is off the hook!

What do you notice about the previous paragraph? You might notice that the language sounds informal, or casual, like someone might talk with a friend or family member, but with the purpose of this chapter, that seems odd, doesn't it? The paragraph also uses a lot of slang. Slang is a type of language that is informal and playful. It often changes over time. The slang of the past is different than the slang of today, but some slang has carried over into the present. Slang also varies by region and culture. There are literally thousands of slang words and expressions. The following table explains just a few of the common ones.

Slang Expressions	
Slang Word or Phrase	***Meaning***
check it out, check this out	look at, watch, examine
chocoholic, workaholic, shopaholic	a person who loves, or is addicted to chocolate, work, or shopping
stuff	things
have some tea	gossip
crack up	to laugh uncontrollably
veg, kick it	relax and do nothing
dude, man	person, man
cool, hip, bad	good, fashionable
gross, nasty	disgusting
pig out	overeat
screw up	make a bad mistake
awesome	great, terrific
the shit	the best

Words are the basis of how a reader or listener judges you, the writer and speaker. When you write an academic paper or speak in a business interview, you want to be sure to choose your words carefully. In our casual, everyday talk, we often use a lot of "ums," "likes," "yeahs," and so on. This everyday language is not appropriate for formal contexts, such as academic papers and business interviews. You should switch between different ways of speaking and writing depending on whether the context if formal or informal. Ultimately, this is part of the message that is a result of the rhetorical context in which you are writing or speaking (see "The Art of Rhetoric").

Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as e-mails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing. It is also not appropriate to use profanity in academic writing, unless -- of course -- you are quoting a profane word from an assigned reading. However, when writing expository writing, another word will almost always fulfill the meaning and emphasis that a profane word may provide in other contexts.

Writing at Work 11.5.1

Frequent exposure to media and popular culture desensitizes 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 3

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.

Exercise 4

Edit the business email by replacing any slang words with more formal language.

Dear Ms. O'Connor:

I am writing to follow up on my interview from last week. First of all, it was awesome to meet you. You are a really cool lady. I believe I would be a pro at all the stuff you mentioned that would be required of me in this job. I am not a workaholic, but I do work hard and "take care of business." Haha. Please contact e if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

M. Ernest Anderson

Answer available at the end of this section.

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 5

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.

Idioms

Idioms are expressions that have a meaning different from the dictionary definition of the individual words in the expression. Because English contains many idioms, newer English speakers have difficulties making logical sense of idioms and idiomatic expressions. The more you are exposed to English, however, the more idioms you will come to understand. Until then, memorizing the more common idioms may be of some help.

Idioms	
Idiom	***Definition***
A blessing in disguise	A good thing you do not recognize as "good" at first
A piece of cake	Easy to do
Better late than never	It is better to do something late than not at all
Get over it	Recover from something (a perceived insult)
I have no idea	I don't know
Not a chance	It will definitely not happen
On pins and needles	Very nervous about something that is or may be happening
On top of the world	Feeling great
Pulling your leg	Making a joke by tricking you
The sky is the limit	The possibilities are endless

What if you come across an idiom you do not understand? Context clues that can help you. Context clues are words or phrases around the unknown word or phrase that may help you decipher the meaning.

1. **Definition or explanation clue.** An idiom ay be explained immediately after its use.

- **Sentence:** I felt like I was sitting on *pins and needles*, **I was so nervous.**

2. **Restatement or synonym clues.** An idiom may be simplified or restated.

- **Sentence:** The young girl felt as though she had been *sent to the dog house* when her mother **punished her** for fighting in school.

3. **Contrast or antonym clues.** An idiom may be clarified by a contrasting phrase or antonym that is near it.

- **Sentence:** Chynna thought the 5k race would be a *piece of cake,* **but it turned out to be very difficult.**

Pay attention tot he signal word *but*, which tells the reader that an opposite thought or concept is occuring.

Using Specific 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, explained how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Exercise 6

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.

Choose Strong, Descriptive Verbs

When used as main verbs, the following words are weak and almost meaningless: have, do, make, went/gone, and the "to be" verbs. Some of these verbs are just fine as linking verbs, but not as main verbs. Choose a more descriptive verb to replace these weak, almost meaningless verbs. This video will explain.

YouTube Video

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Video 11.5.1

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Exercise 7

In this exercise, replace the weak verbs with stronger, more descriptive verbs. You may need to replace more than one weak verb in a sentence.

1. Bethany's mother made her do her homework before Bethany could go out to play.

2. Michael went to play video games with his buddy, Pat, at Pat's house.

3. Chris and Sam went to prom and then hung out with friends afterward. They didn't get home until 3 a.m.!

4. Donna was doing her best, but it was sometimes hard to keep up and balance work and school.

5. The three-year-old was being childish when throwing her sibling's toy across the rooom.

Exercise 8

Rewrite the following personal essay by replacing the slang, clichés, and overly general language with stronger, more precise language.

My biggest regret happened in high school. I had always felt like a fish out of water, so during my sophomore year I was determined to fit in with the cool people. Man, was that an uphill battle. I don't even know why I tried, but hindsight is 20/20 I guess. The first thing I did was change the way I dressed. I went from wearing clothes I was comfortable in to wearing stuff that was so not me. Then I started wearing a ton of makeup, and my brother was all like, "What happened to your face?" Not only did my looks change, my personality changed a lot too. I started to act all stuck up and bossy with my friends, and they didn't know how to respond to this person that used to be me. Luckily, this phase didn't last more than a couple of months. I decided it was more fun to be me than to try to be someone else. I guess you can't fit a square peg in a round hole after all.

Collaboration

Compare your changes with a classmate.

Exercise 9

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.

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 10

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. Table 4.3 "Common Antonyms" lists common words and their antonyms.

Table 4.3 - 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

Word	Antonym		Word	Antonym
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 11

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 a coward because no one was injured.
2. Even though the botany lecture was two hours long, Gerard found it incredibly dull.
3. My mother says it is impolite to 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 me ignorance.
5. When our instructor said the final paper was compulsory, it was music to my ears!
6. My only virtues are coffee, video games, and really loud music.
7. Elvin was so bold when he walked in the classroom that he sat in the back row and did not participate.
8. Maria thinks elephants who live in freedom have a sad look in their eyes.
9. The teacher filled her students' minds with gloomy thoughts about their futures.
10. The guest attended to every one of our needs.

Contributors

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Answers

Exercise 4

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11.6: Sentence Focus

Figure: Image from Pixabay

Sentence Focus

Sentence focus means that the grammatical subject of your sentence is the same as the semantic subject. In other words, the meaning (semantics) subject matches the grammar. Sentences that aren't focused can be confusing because it's not clear who is doing what, and they tend to be overly wordy. If you need a refresher about how to identify the subject(s) and verb(s) in a sentence, see: "Verbs" and "Sentence Structure."

Here is an example of an overly wordy, unfocused sentence:

- In Smith's writing, there are many indications of their misunderstanding of natural selection.

A more focused version of this sentence, which says the same thing could read:

- Smith's argument indicates their misunderstanding of natural selection.

Notice: The focused sentence has eight words instead of thirteen, but the revision hasn't eliminated any meaning! The prepositional phrase didn't add anything to the point, but we need to keep (and begin with) the subject, Smith's argument. Therefore, we can omit "in" and "an." "There are" can be removed because we aren't talking about existence here.

You can avoid writing unfocused sentences by using active voice, using concrete subjects, using strong verbs, and keeping your subjects toward the beginning of the sentence and before the verb. Avoiding "there is/there are" can help keep sentences focused (unless you are writing about the existence of something). This is also true of "it is."

Use Active Voice

Use active voice when writing. However, passive voice can be acceptable when you want to keep the focus on what was done and not who did it. However, this should not be at the expense of clarity. In science writing, passive voice is generally expected in the methods section of research papers and in lab reports because the focus is on what's being done, not who is doing it. In other sections of research papers and most writing, however, use active voice if possible.

Passive voice occurs when the writer places the grammatical object in the subject position in a sentence. Therefore, the actual subject of the sentence is in the object position (at the end) or missing. In passive voice, the verb will be in past participle ("to

be" + "ed" verb) form. Looking for this verb form is one of the easiest ways to tell if a sentence is in passive voice. In the following example, the subject (if there is one) is in bold and the past participle verb is underlined.

Examples: The frog *was dissected* by the **student**.

A solution *was added* to the beaker. (By whom?)

To identify passive voice, look for verbs that use a form of the "to be" ("was", "is" "being,") and a past tense verb (ends in "ed") after it. Then ask yourself whether this is an acceptable use of the passive.

Tip: The difference between past perfect tense and a past participle is that the subject is at the end of the sentence or nonexistent with a past participle. The subject will still be before the verb with the past perfect tense.

Writing at Work

At work, we commonly must ask people to do things, or we might need to make a recommendation. Sometimes, we may feel as though our tone is too direct if we use the active voice. In some work situations, the passive voice may seem more polite, and it may be acceptable to use the passive voice in some cases. However, even at work, most writing should be in active voice. Active voice implies responsibility and transparency; conversely, if passive voice is used when it isn't needed, it can appear that you are trying to hide something. Such situations have been captured by the phrase "mistakes were made," implying that no one takes responsibility for those mistakes and that the writer or speaker is dishonest.

A direct tone and active voice is also valued in American business life. Business cultures in other parts of the world may differ in their expectations about this, so if you plan to work for companies outside of the U.S. or for international companies within the U.S., research the acceptable style for making requests at your workplace.

Exercise 1

Identify which sentences are in passive voice in the following sentences. The first couple of sentences have clues. The rest do not.

1. Measurements **were performed** on the wood timbers by a construction worker.

2. They **were satisfied** with the outcome of the discussion.

3. Removal of the mitochondria was achieved by the scientist.

4. Two samples were obtained from each brain.

5. Our results showed that the dogs were protected by the vaccine.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 2

In each of the following sentences and on a separate piece of paper, a) decide if the sentence is active or passive; b) decide whether the use of the passive is acceptable and why or why not; and c) rewrite the sentence in active voice if the passive voice is not acceptable.

1. Marijuana caused an increase in apetite and a reduction in pain.

2. Ozone continued to be depleted because of aerosol spray use.

3. A mistake was made.

4. Mouse testing proceeded for the Phase B trials.

5. Group and individual activities were participated in by the class.

6. Documents should be submitted online by July 10.

Collaboration available at the end of this section.

Avoid "There Is/There Are" and "It Is" Most of the Time

“There is” is not necessary unless you are writing about the existence of something. “There is” tends to cloud writing because it shoves the real subject of the sentence farther down into the sentence. Choose the actual topic as the subject of your sentence and eliminate “there is.” You may need to change the verb and possibly a relative pronoun as well because of the changes in sentence structure that "there is" creates. Begin your core clause with the subject you are writing about. In the example sentences, below, the core sentence is in brackets. In the unfocused examples, the grammatical subject is in bold and the semantic (meaning) subject is in red. In the focused sentences, since the grammatical and semantic subjects are one in the same, they are just bold.

Unfocused sentence: In Malaysia, [**there are** large numbers of women in computer science], which is not perceived as a "masculine" field.

Focused sentence: In Malaysia, [**large numbers of women are** in computer science], which is not perceived as a "masculine" field.

“It is” can be written better most of the time; the phrase tends to be empty filler.

Unfocused sentence: It is with the utmost care that [I craft my sentences].

Focused sentenced: [**I craft** my sentences] with the utmost care.

Exercise 3 11.6.1

In the following sentences, decide if "there is," "there are," or "it is" are talking about existence or giving extra emphasis to something. If not, rewrite the sentence.

1. There are three measures, and they all point to the idea that we need to be concerned about climate change.

2. It is with great pleasure that I introduce our guest speaker!

3. It is a lovely day.

4. There is a god.

5. After going to see the band play, there were some shady characters outside, so I decided to hang around awhile inside.

Answer available at the end of this section.

The subject and an object of a preposition cannot be the same word

The subject of a sentence cannot also be the object of a prepositional phrase. This problem commonly occurs when students introduce sources in their writing. In the following incorrect examples, the subject of the sentence (in brackets) appears in an introductory prepositional phrase (in blue). The corrected examples follow. Notice that in most cases, the introductory prepositional phrase disappears. (For more explanation of a prepositional phrase and subjects, see "Prepositional Phrases" and "Word Order and Sentence Structure").

Incorrect: Therefore, with [the lack of qualified teachers] will only cause unqualified students in the future.

Correct: Therefore, [the lack] of qualified teachers will only cause unqualified students in the future.

Incorrect: According to [Romeo, laments] "Parting is such sweet sorrow."

Correct: [Romeo laments], "Parting is such sweet sorrow."

Correct: According to popular culture, [Romeo's statement, "Parting is such sweet sorry," is] still a popular line.

Notice that the last example still begins wit a prepositional phrase, but the object of the preposition, "popular culture" is different from the subject of the sentence, "Romeo's statement."

Tip: Do not double your subject by saying the subject and a pronoun that stands for the subject right after it.

Incorrect: Emily Dickinson, she wrote a lot of poems, most of which were not read until after she died.

Correct: Emily Dickinson wrote a lot of poems, most of which were not read until after she died.

Exercise 4

For this exercise, rewrite any sentence in which the subject is doubled up or the subject also appears as the object of the preposition in a prepositional phrase.

1. By "dogginess" means the qualities of following directions and providing love.

2. According to Brandeis, she states that "the prevalence of male tress in the landscape contributes to peoples' allergy problems."

3. In the article claims that gun violence can be reduced if gun responsibility becomes part of the training.

4. According to Jones, said that whether someone will become violent in a given situation depends on a combination of nature and nurture.

5. In doing this demonstrates her self-centeredness.

6. My tortoiseshell cat, she responds to music by moving her tail at different tempos.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 5

Fix the sentence focus in the following sentences using the strategies practices on this page. Ask yourself: Who or what does what (to whom or what)? Then, use concrete subjects and active verbs.

1. Also, there is a need for more current curricula, and also a need for more teachers.

2. If the education system is funded equally and provided with proper materials might just fix the gap.

3. Although the interplay among economic factors is important, it is often the availability of affordable childcare that determines whether a parent returns to the work force.

4. The boiling water is drained in the colander, the pasta shook dry, and the sauce drizzled on it.

5. People argue about whether there are ghosts.

6. Before my dog was washed, we went to the beach.

7. By disentangling words will create a more concise sentence.

8. After having her bath, there was a dog park she wanted to go to.

9. Sniffing everything, my dog she dawdles while she walks.

10. It is taking us forever to go a few blocks because there are fire hydrants to sniff and barking dogs to respond to, and at the end is pooped out.

Answer available at the end of this section.

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Answers

Exercise 1

Exercise 2

Compare what you did with a classmate. If your answers or changes don't agree, bring it up in class.

Exercise 3 11.6.1

Exercise 4

Exercise 5

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11.7: Coordination and Subordination

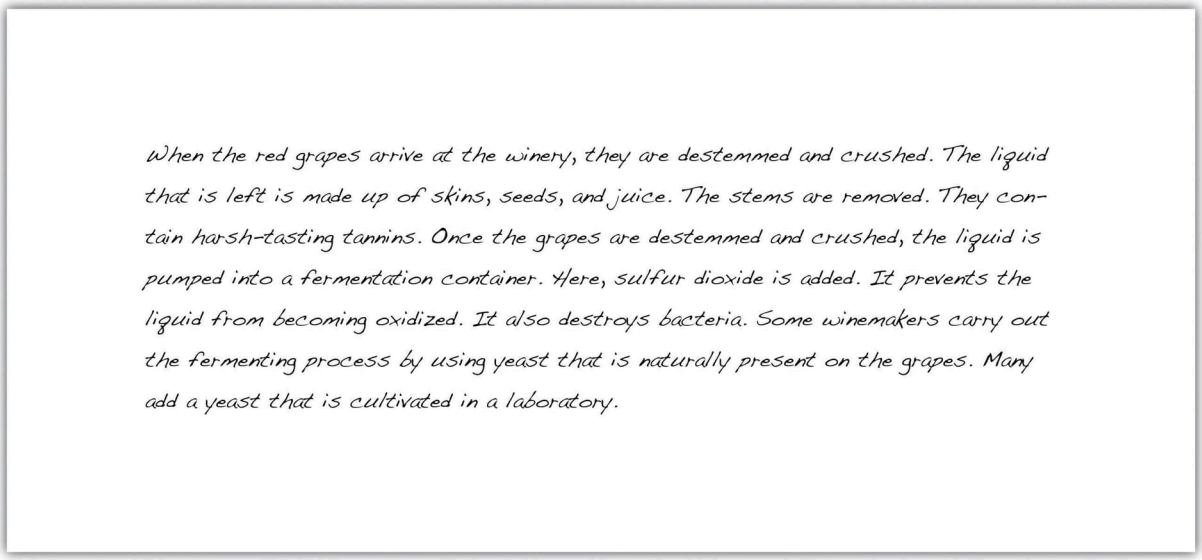
Writers use three major methods of joining their ideas together in one sentence: coordination and subordination. Learning use coordination and subordination well is foundational to creating cohesion (or a smooth flow) in your writing, as well as to express how your ideas relate to each other logically.

Definitions

Coordination: Joining two related ideas of equal importance

Subordination: Joining two related ideas of unequal importance

Connecting sentences with coordinate or subordinate clauses creates more coherent paragraphs, and in turn, produces more effective writing. In this section, you will read excerpts from an essay by Noemi, who drafted an essay about wine production, as she revises her writing for coordination and subordination. Read this excerpt from Noemi's essay.



When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Figure: Noemi's first draft feels a little choppy and disconnected because we don't know if some ideas are more important than others or how the ideas relate to each other logically. To begin her revision process, she started looking at coordinating ideas of equal importance.

Coordination

Coordination joins two independent clauses that contain related ideas of equal importance.

Original sentences: I spent my entire paycheck last week. I am staying home this weekend.

In their current form, these sentences contain two separate ideas that may or may not be related. Am I staying home this week *because* I spent my paycheck, or is there another reason for my lack of enthusiasm to leave the house? To indicate a relationship between the two ideas, we can use the coordinating conjunction *so*:

Revised sentence: I spent my entire paycheck last week, **so** I am staying home this weekend.

The revised sentence illustrates that the two ideas are connected. Notice that the sentence retains two independent clauses (*I spent my entire paycheck*; *I am staying home this weekend*) because each can stand alone as a complete idea.

Coordinating Conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction is a word that joins two independent clauses. The coordinating conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. These can be memorized by the acronym FANBOYS. Note that a comma precedes the coordinating conjunction when joining two clauses but not when joining a phrase (such as in this sentence).

The following table explains the logic that each coordinating conjunction represents.

Function/Logic	Coordinating Conjunction	Example
cause	for	I had to bring my car to the body shop, for I had run into a pole.
addition	and	I strive to find balance in my life and my best friend tries to find balance also.
choice/alternative (negative)	nor	I have never been to Europe, nor have I been to Australia.
contrast	but	She had packed all her bags for vacation, but the flight was late.
choice/alternative	or	Next summer, I can either take a longer RV trip, or I can travel for a shorter period of time and take a train somewhere.
contrast	yet	I had tied a scarf around my luggage to find it at the baggage carousel, yet I couldn't find my bag when I disembarked the plane.
effect	so	I had packed almost everything in there, so I felt distraught.

The next table gives an example for how you might join two clauses with each type of coordinating conjunction.

Independent Clause	Coordinating Conjunction	Independent Clause	Revised Sentence
I will not be attending the dance.	for (indicates a reason or cause)	I have no one to go with.	I will not be attending the dance, for I have no one to go with.
I plan to stay home.	and (adds another ideas)	I will complete an essay for class.	I plan to stay home, and I will complete an essay for class.
Jessie isn't going to be at the dance.	nor (indicates a negative)	Tom won't be there either.	Jessie isn't going to be at the dance, nor will Tom be there*.
The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance.	but (indicates a contrast)	I don't think many people are going.	The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, but I don't think many people are going.
I might go to the next fundraising event.	or (offers an alternative)	I might donate some money to the cause.	I might go to the next fundraising event, or I might donate some money to the cause.
My parents are worried that I am antisocial.	yet (indicates contrast)	I have many friends at school.	My parents are worried that I am antisocial, yet I have many friends at school.
Buying a new dress is expensive.	so (indicates a result)	By staying home I will save money.	Buying a new dress is expensive, so by staying home I will save money.

* When using nor, you must change the sentence structure of the second clause you are joining. Notice that when joining the following two clauses with "nor," the subject and the linking verb in the second clause are switched around and the negative "not" is removed because the negative is conveyed through "nor."

Original: I **did not go** shopping this weekend. **I did not watch** any sports on TV.

Combined: I **did not go** shopping this weekend, *nor* **did I watch** any sports on TV.

YouTube Video

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Video 11.7.1

The Coordinating Conjunctions Song (FANBOYS). **Provided by:** Anchor Creative. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Exercise 1

Join the following sentence pairs with the coordinating conjunction that you feel reflects the logic that holds the two ideas together.

1. Ray likes EDM. Kelvin likes rap.

2. The book has been on the bestseller list for months it's one of the most boring novels I have ever read.

3. In an earthquake, buildings sway back and forth, many rattle and groan.

4. My living room is very small, I should not buy any more furniture.

5. Dedicated ecologists do not kill wildlife they shoot with cameras instead of guns.

6. Jane is my best friend, she is always there for me when I need her.

7. She is not only an excellent student, she is also and outstanding athlete.

8. John and Mike enjoyed the movies they wished the seats had been more cozy.

9. The TV wasn't working, I walked over to a friend's house to watch the game.

10. The telephone was ringing, someone was knocking at the front door as well.

11. I like action movies, he likes comedies.

12. I missed the 8 am bus, I slept through my alarm.

13. Something was obviously wrong with the meatloaf, it was glowing in the dark.

14. Harry was a good musician he could never keep a steady job in a band.

15. Mark is not very interested in sports, he does however, like to water ski.

16. I was happy with my new apartment it was in a good location and the rent was low.

Exercise 2

Fix the coordinating conjunction punctuation where needed in the following sentences. Remember that coordinating conjunctions that join two complete ideas (clauses) must have a comma before them. Coordinating conjunctions that join a phrase (part of a sentence) to another sentence structure do not need a comma before them.

1. He was amazed by the selection of items he could find when shopping online yet he had a hard time picturing how clothes would look on him.

2. Beth was horrified, but fascinated by the effects of consumer culture on people.

3. He was fearful of COVID-19 but he still went out and protested as he felt it was more important.

4. Pandemics are more likely to happen because of global warming, and increasing pressure on wild animals.

5. Change can happen when people of all races, and creeds stop treating each other in ways they wouldn't treat themselves.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Conjunctive Adverbs

Another method of joining two independent clauses with related and equal ideas is to use a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon.A conjunctive adverb is a linking word that demonstrates a relationship between two clauses. The punctuation of a conjunctive adverb varies depending upon where in the sentence the adverb appears. Once joined, the following sentences show cause and effect.

Original sentences: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics. She trains every day.

Since these sentences contain two equal and related ideas, they may be joined using a conjunctive adverb. Now, read the revised sentence:

Revised sentence: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics; therefore, she trains every day.

The revised sentence explains the relationship between Bridget's desire to take part in the next Olympics and her daily training. Notice that the conjunctive adverb comes after a semicolon that separates the two clauses and is followed by a comma.

Review the following chart of some common conjunctive adverbs with examples of how they are used:

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Addition	also, furthermore, moreover, similarly, likewise	Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.
Contrast	instead, however, otherwise	Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take the train.
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; indeed, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, as a result, consequently, hence, thus, therefore	I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then, after	Tim crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.
Condition	otherwise	The hotel room will hopefully be ready when I arrive; otherwise, I will have to leave my luggage in the car.
Choice/ Alternative	alternatively, on the other hand, conversely	I can continue with my current job and try to make it a better situation; alternatively, I can quit and try to find a new position.

Take a look at Noemi's essay on wine production and identify some areas in which he might use coordination.

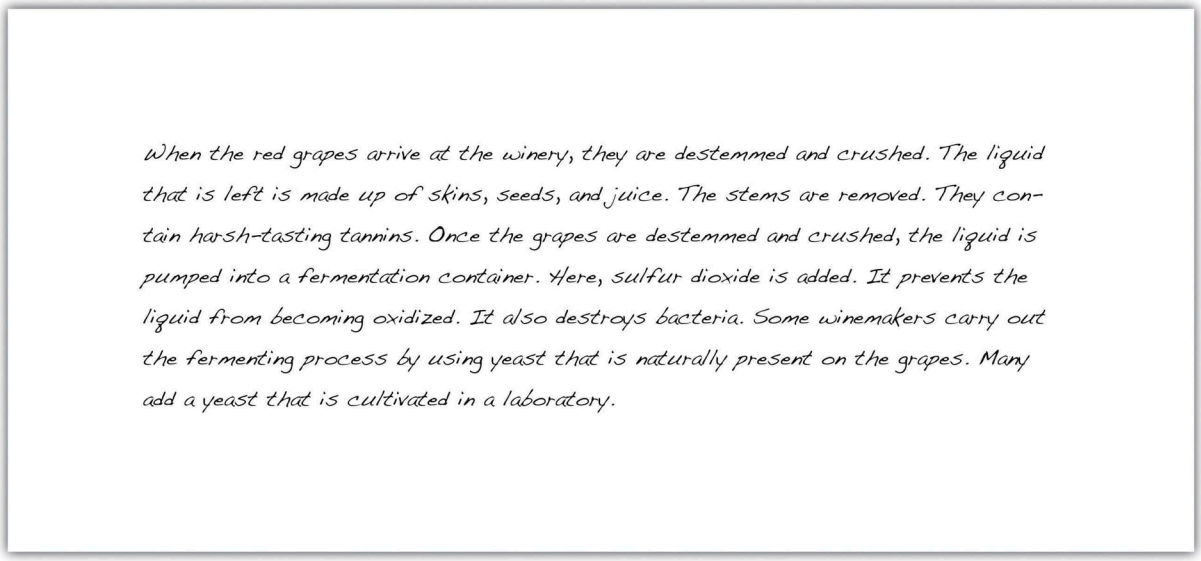

Figure: Now look at Noemi's revised essay. Did you coordinate the same sentences? You may find that your answers are different because there are usually several ways to join two independent clauses.

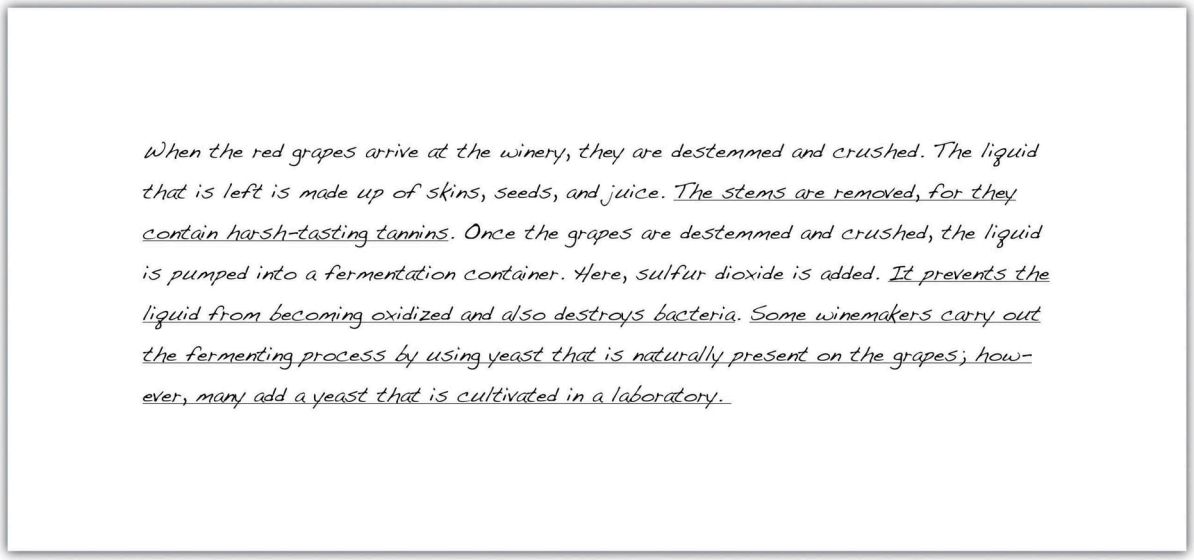

Figure: Tip: Punctuating Transitional Adverbs

Transitional adverbs can be tricky to punctuate. If the transitional adverb is used between the two clauses, place a semi-colon before the transitional adverb and a comma after, such as in the following sentence:

- They were looking forward to going home for the semester break; however, they had to finish finals first.

If the transitional adverb appears in the middle of the second clause of the sentence (it should never appear in the first), it should be punctuated with commas on both sides, as in the following sentence.

- They were looking forward to going home for the semester break. They, however, had to finish finals first.

Finally, if the transitional adverb appears at the end of the second clause, it should be punctuated with a comma before and a period after (the end of the sentence).

- They were looking forward to going home for the semester break. They had to finish finals first, however.

Exercise 3

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a conjunctive adverb. Then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor's building. He owns several cats and a parrot.
2. New legislation prevents drivers from sending or reading text messages while driving. Many people continue to use their phones illegally.
3. The coroner concluded that the young man had taken a lethal concoction of drugs. By the time his relatives found him, nothing could be done.
4. Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Ashley carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car key, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip. He called the manufacturer for advice.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

When writing an essay or a report, it is important that you do not use excessive coordination. Workplace documents should be clear and concise, so only join two clauses that are logically connected and can work together to make one main point. If you repeat the same coordinating conjunction several times in a sentence, you are probably including too many ideas. This may make it difficult for readers to pick out the most important information in each sentence.

Subordination

Subordination joins two sentences with related ideas by merging them into a main clause (a complete sentence) and a dependent clause (a construction that relies on the main clause to complete its meaning). Unlike coordination, which allows a writer to give equal weight to the two ideas that are being combined, subordination enables a writer to emphasize one idea over the other. Take a look at the following sentences:

Original sentences: Tracy stopped to help the injured man. She would be late for work.

To illustrate that these two ideas are related, we can rewrite them as a single sentence using the subordinating conjunction *even though*.

Revised sentence: Even though Tracy would be late for work, she stopped to help the injured man.

In the revised version, we now have an independent clause (*she stopped to help the injured man*) that stands as a complete sentence and a dependent clause (*even though Tracy would be late for work*) that is subordinate to the main clause. Notice that the revised sentence emphasizes the fact that Tracy stopped to help the injured man, rather than the fact she would be late for work. We could also write the sentence this way:

Revised sentence: Tracy stopped to help the injured man even though she would be late for work.

The meaning remains the same in both sentences, with the subordinating conjunction *even though* introducing the dependent clause.

Tip: Subordination Punctuation

To punctuate sentences correctly, look at the position of the main clause and the subordinate clause. If a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, use a comma between the two clauses. If the subordinate clause follows the main clause, no punctuation is needed.

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Video 11.7.1

The Subordinating Conjunctions Song. **Provided by:** Anchor Creative. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Subordinating Conjunctions

A subordinating conjunction is a word that joins a subordinate (dependent) clause to a main (independent) clause. Review the following chart of some common subordinating conjunctions and examples of how they are used:

Function	Subordinating Conjunction	Example
Concession	although, while, though, whereas, even though	Sarah completed her report even though she had to stay late to get it done.
Condition	if, unless, until	Until we know what is causing the problem, we will not be able to fix it.
Manner	as if, as, though	Everyone in the conference room stopped talking at once, as though they had been stunned into silence.
Place	where, wherever	Rita is in San Jose where she has several important client meetings.
Cause	because, since, so that, in order that	Because the air conditioning was turned up so high, everyone in the office wore sweaters.
Time	after, before, while, once, when	After the meeting had finished, we all went to lunch.

Take a look at the excerpt from Noemi's essay and identify some areas in which she might use subordination.

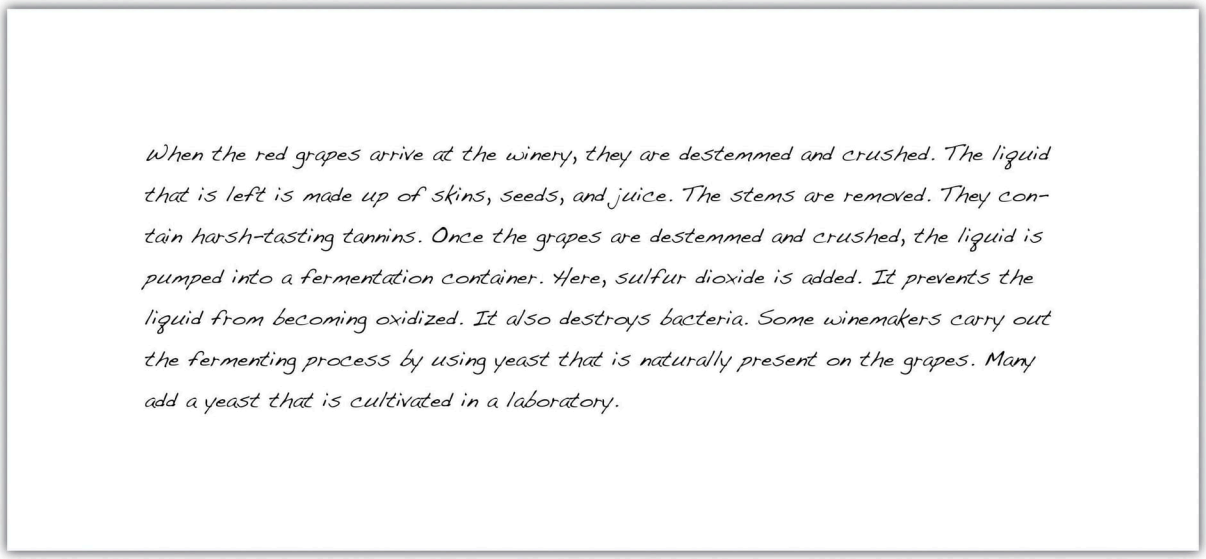
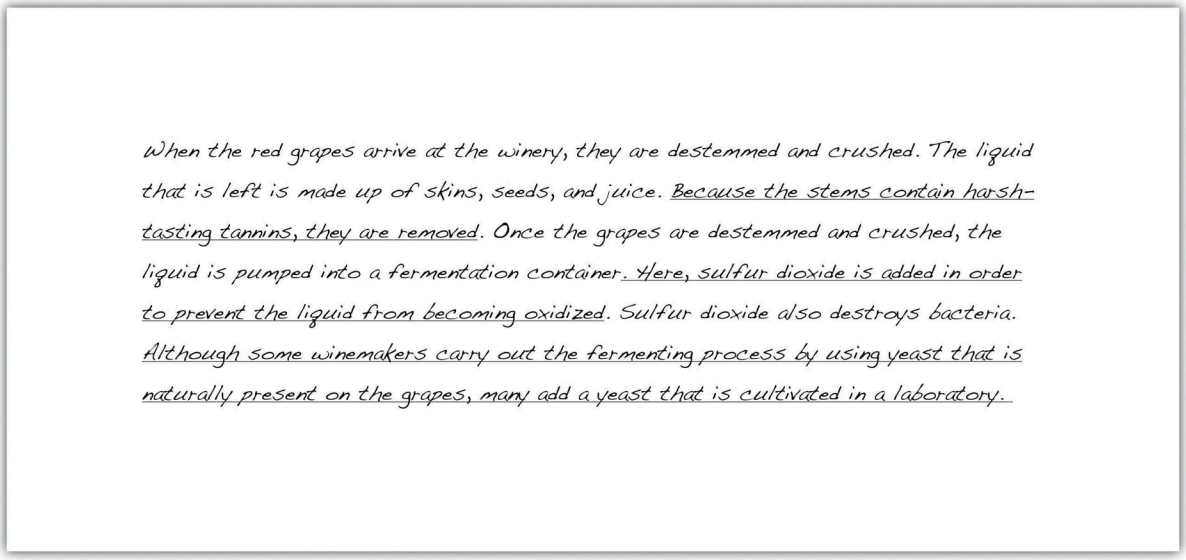


Figure: Now look at Noemi's revised essay and compare your answers. You will probably notice that there are many different ways to subordinate sentences.



Exercise 4

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a subordinating conjunction and then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Check your revised sentences for correct punctuation.

1. Jake is going to Mexico. There are beautiful beaches there.
2. A snowstorm disrupted traffic all over the East Coast. There will be long delivery delays this week.
3. My neighbor had his television volume turned up too high. I banged on his door and asked him to keep the noise down.
4. Jessica prepared the potato salad and the sautéed vegetables. Jordan marinated the chicken.
5. Romeo poisons himself. Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

Exercise 5

Copy the paragraph from Joshua's essay onto your own sheet of paper. Then edit using the techniques you have learned in this section. Join the underlined sentences using coordination or subordination. Check your revised sentences for punctuation.

Answer available at the end of this section.

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Answers

Exercise 2

Exercise 5

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11.8: Appositives, Adjective Clauses, Verbals

Appositives

An appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

- The lineman sacked the quarter back. The lineman was burly at 6 foot 5 and 275 pounds.
- The lineman, a burly man at 6 foot 5 and 275 pounds, sacked the quarterback.

To combine two sentences using an appositive, drop the subject and verb from the sentence that renames the noun and turn it into a phrase. Note that in the previous example, the appositive is positioned immediately after the noun it describes. An appositive must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers.

Appositive after Noun:	**Appositive before Noun:**
Scott, a poorly trained athlete, was not expected to win the race.	A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race.

Unlike adjective clauses and participial phrases, which may be restrictive or nonrestrictive, appositives are always nonrestrictive, and thus they are always set off by commas. A comma is placed both before and after the appositive. This video explains about appositives a little more.

Appositives -- 2 Minute Teacher. **Provided by:** Cody Walker. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

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Video 11.8.1

Exercise 1

Rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using any of the techniques you have learned in this section:

- Baby sharks are called pups. Pups can be born in one of three ways
- The Pacific Ocean is the world's largest ocean. It extends from the Arctic in the north to the Southern Ocean in the south.
- Michael Phelps won eight gold medals in the 2008 Olympics. He is a champion swimmer.
- Ashley introduced her colleague Dan to her husband, Jim. She speculated that the two of them would have a lot in common.
- Cacao is harvested by hand. It is then sold to chocolate-processing companies at the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Adjective Clauses (also known as Relative Clauses)

Here is a brief review of adjective clauses and relative pronouns.

An **adjective clause** is used to **describe** a **noun**:

The car, **which was red**, belonged to Young-Hee.

A **relative pronoun** is usually used to **introduce** an **adjective clause**:

Young-Hee, **who** is a Korean student, lives in Victoria.

For more information about relative clauses (adjective clauses) please see Section 11.12.

The main relative pronouns are:

Pronoun	Use	Example
Who	used for **humans** in the **subject** position	Hans, **who** is an architect, lives in Berlin.
Whom	used for **humans** in the **object** position	Marike, **whom** Hans knows well, is an interior decorator.
Which	used for **things** and **animals** in the **subject** or **object** position	Marike has a dog **which** follows her everywhere.
That	used for **humans**, **animals** and **things**, in the **subject** or **object** position (but see below)	Marike is decorating a house **that** Hans designed.
Whose	used for **humans**, **animals** and **things** in the **subject** or **object** position to show possession	Marike, **whose** dog follows her everywhere, is an animal lover.

There are two main kinds of adjective clause:

1. Non-defining clauses

Non-defining clauses give **extra information** about the noun, but they are not essential:

The desk in the corner, **which is covered in books**, is mine.

Explanation: We don't need this information in order to understand the sentence. “The desk in the corner is mine” is a good sentence on its own — we still know which desk is referred to. Note that non-defining clauses are usually separated by commas, and “**that**” is not usually used in this kind of context.

2. Defining clauses

Defining clauses give **essential information** about the noun:

The package **that arrived this morning** is on the desk.

Explanation: We need this information in order to understand the sentence. Without the relative clause, we don't know which package is being referred to. Note that “**that**” is often used in defining relative clauses, and they are not separated by commas.

When you are sure that you understand the lesson, you can continue with the exercises here.

Verbals/ Gerunds

Here is a brief review of gerunds and how to form them.

Gerunds are **nouns formed from verbs**.

walking, talking, thinking, listening

Gerunds are **formed by adding ING to verbs**.

think + ing = thinking

Spelling Rules

There are a few spelling rules that you need to know in order to form gerunds correctly. The spelling of a gerund depends on the **vowels** (a, e, i, o, u) and **consonants** (b, c, d, f, etc.) at the end of the verb.

Rule	Example
If there is **more than one consonant**, just **add ING**	thi**nk** + ing = think**ing**
If there is **more than one vowel**, just **add ING**	b**ea**t + ing = beat**ing**
If there is **one vowel** and **one consonant**, and the **syllable is stressed**, **double the consonant and add ING**	h**i**t + t + ing = hitt**ing**
If there are **one or more consonants** and **E**, **remove the E and add ING**	ta**ke** + ing = tak**ing**
In **most other cases**, just **add ING**	study + ing = study**ing** see + ing = see**ing**

When you are sure that you understand the lesson, you can continue with the exercises here.

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Answers

Exercise 1

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11.9: Active vs. Passive Voice

Active and Passive Voice

Voice is a nebulous term in writing. It can refer to the general "feel" of the writing, or it can be used in a more technical sense. In this section, we will focus on the latter sense as we discuss active and passive voice.

You've probably heard of the passive voice—perhaps in a comment from an English teacher or in the grammar checker of a word processor. In both of these instances, you were (likely) guided away from the passive voice. Why is this the case? Why is the passive voice so hated? After all, it's been used twice on this page already (three times now). When the passive voice is used to frequently, it can make your writing seem flat and drab. However, there are some instances where the passive voice is a better choice than the active.

So just what is the difference between these two voices? In the simplest terms, an active voice sentence is written in the form of "A does B." (For example, "Carmen sings the song.") A passive voice sentence is written in the form of "B is done by A." (For example, "The song is sung by Carmen.") Both constructions are grammatically sound and correct.

Let's look at a couple more examples of the passive voice:

- I've been hit! (*or*, I have been hit!)
- Jasper was thrown from the car when it was struck from behind.

You may have noticed something unique about the previous two sentences: the subject of the sentence is not the person (or thing) performing the action. The passive voice "hides" who does the action. Despite these sentences being completely grammatically sound, we don't know who hit "me" or what struck the car.

The passive is created using the verb *to be* (e.g., the song **is** sung; it **was** struck from behind). Remember that *to be* conjugates irregularly. Its forms include *am, are, is, was, were,* and *will be*, which we learned about earlier in the course.

Remember, *to be* also has more complex forms like *had been*, *is being*, and *was being*.

- Mirella **is being** pulled away from everything she loves.
- Pietro **had been** pushed; I knew it.
- Unfortunately, my car **was being** towed away by the time I got to it.

Because *to be* has other uses than just creating the passive voice, we need to be careful when we identify passive sentences. It's easy to mistake a sentence like "She was falling." or "He is short." for a passive sentence. However, in "She was falling," *was* simply indicates that the sentence takes place in the past. In "He is short," *is* is a linking verb. If there is no "real" action taking place, *is* is simply acting as a linking verb.

There are two key features that will help you identify a passive sentence:

- Something is happening (the sentence has a verb that is not a linking verb).
- The subject of the sentence is not doing that thing.

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Video 11.9.1

Active vs Passive Voice in Your Writing. **Provided by:** GCFLearnFree.org. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Usage

As you read at the two sentences below, think about the how the different voice may affect the meaning or implications of the sentence:

- **Passive voice:** The rate of evaporation is controlled by the size of an opening.
- **Active voice:** The size of an opening controls the rate of evaporation.

The passive choice slightly emphasizes "the rate of evaporation," while the active choice emphasizes "the size of an opening." Simple. So why all the fuss? Because passive constructions can produce grammatically tangled sentences such as this:

Groundwater flow is influenced by zones of fracture concentration, as can be recognized by the two model simulations (see Figures 1 and 2), by which one can see . . .

The sentence is becoming a burden for the reader, and probably for the writer too. As often happens, the passive voice here has smothered potential verbs and kicked off a runaway train of prepositions. But the reader's task gets much easier in the revised version below:

Two model simulations (Figures 1 and 2) illustrate how zones of fracture concentration influence groundwater flow. These simulations show . . .

To revise the above, all I did was look for the two buried things (simulations and zones) in the original version that could actually *do* something, and I made the sentence clearly about these two nouns by placing them in front of active verbs. This is the general principle to follow as you compose in the active voice: Place concrete nouns that can perform work in front of active verbs.

Exercise 1

Are the following sentences in the active or passive voice?

1. Jayden drank more sodas than anyone else at the party.
2. The samples were prepared in a clean room before being sent out for further examination.
3. Karen was dancing with Joshua when she suddenly realized she needed to leave.
4. Carlos was a very serious scientist with unique interests.
5. When I returned to my room, my luggage had been stolen.

Show Answer

Answer available at the end of this section.

Revising Weak Passive-Voice Sentences

As we've mentioned, the passive voice can be a shifty operator—it can cover up its source, that is, who's doing the acting, as this example shows:

- **Passive:** The papers **will be graded** according to the criteria stated in the syllabus.
  - *Graded by whom though?*
- **Active: The teacher** will grade the papers according to the criteria stated in the syllabus.

It's this ability to cover the actor or agent of the sentence that makes the passive voice a favorite of people in authority—policemen, city officials, and, yes, teachers. At any rate, you can see how the passive voice can cause wordiness,

indirectness, and comprehension problems.

Passive	Question	Active
Your figures **have been reanalyzed** in order to determine the coefficient of error. The results **will be announced** when the situation is judged appropriate.	Who analyzes, and who will announce?	**We** have reanalyzed your figures in order to determine the range of error. **We** will announce the results when the time is right.
With the price of housing at such inflated levels, those loans **cannot be paid** off in any shorter period of time.	Who can't pay the loans off?	With the price of housing at such inflated levels, **homeowners** cannot pay off those loans in any shorter period of time.
After the arm of the hand-held stapler **is pushed** down, the blade from the magazine **is raised by** the top-leaf spring, and the magazine and base.	Who pushes it down, and who or what raises it?	After **you** push down on the arm of the hand-held stapler, **the top-leaf spring** raises the blade from the magazine, and the magazine and base move apart.
However, market share **is being lost by** 5.25-inch diskettes as is shown in the graph in Figure 2.	Who or what is losing market share, who or what shows it?	However, **5.25-inch diskettes** are losing market share as the graph in **Figure 2** shows.
For many years, federal regulations concerning the use of wire-tapping **have been ignored**. Only recently **have** tighter restrictions **been imposed** on the circumstances that warrant it.	Who has ignored the regulations, and who is now imposing them?	For many years, **government officials** have ignored federal regulations concerning the use of wire-tapping. Only recently has **the federal government** imposed tighter restrictions on the circumstances that warrant it.

Exercise 2

Convert these passive voice sentences into the active voice. Why is the active voice a better choice for each of these sentences?

1. The process, which was essential for the experiment's success, was completed by Enzo.
2. The cake that I worked on all day long is being eaten by Justin.
3. After the pattern has been applied to the fabric, work on the embroidery can be started.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Don't get the idea that the passive voice is always wrong and should never be used. It is a good writing technique when we don't want to be bothered with an obvious or too-often-repeated subject and when we need to rearrange words in a sentence for emphasis. The next page will focus more on how and why to use the passive voice.

Using the Passive Voice

There are several different situations where the passive voice is more useful than the active voice.

- When you don't know who did the action: *The paper had been moved.*
  - The active voice would be something like this: "Someone had moved the paper." While this sentence is technically fine, the passive voice sentence has a more subtle element of mystery, which can be especially helpful in creating a mood in fiction.
- When you want to hide who did the action: *The window had been broken.*
  - The sentence is either hiding who broke the window or they do not know. Again, the sentence can be reformed to say "Someone had broken the window," but using the word *someone* clearly indicates that someone (though we may not know who) is at fault here. Using the passive puts the focus on the window rather than on the person who broke it, as he or she is completely left out of the sentence.
- When you want to emphasize the person or thing the action was done to: *Caroline was hurt when Kent broke up with her.*
  - We automatically focus on the subject of the sentence. If the sentence were to say "Kent hurt Caroline when he broke up with her," then our focus would be drawn to Kent rather than Caroline.

- A subject that can't actually *do* anything: *Caroline was hurt when she fell into the trees.*
  - While the trees hurt Caroline, they didn't actually do anything. Thus, it makes more sense to have Caroline as the subject rather than saying "The trees hurt Caroline when she fell into them."

Note: It's often against convention in scholarly writing to use *I*. While this may seem like a forced rule, it also stems from the fact that scholars want to emphasize the science or research as opposed to the author of the paper. This often results in the passive voice being the best choice. This is not the case in other formal settings, such as in resumes and in cover letters.

Exercise 3

Consider the following instances. In each case, determine why the writers might want to use active or passive voice. Write an example sentence based on their circumstances.

1. Antonella made an error in her calculations that ruined an experiment. This error ended up costing both time and materials. She has to write a report to her boss. What might she say about the experiment?
2. Isabel is writing a supernatural thriller. Her main character, Liam, notices that his keys aren't where he left them. How might Isabel word this realization?
3. Thiago is writing a cover letter to apply for a new job. He is listing out tasks that he does at his current job. How would he want to word these items?

Answer available at the end of this section.

Using the Passive

Now that we know there are some instances where passive voice is the best choice, how do we use the passive voice to it fullest? The answer lies in writing direct sentences—in passive voice—that have simple subjects and verbs. Compare the two sentences below:

- Photomicrographs were taken to facilitate easy comparison of the samples.
- Easy comparison of the samples was facilitated by the taking of photomicrographs.

Both sentences are written in the passive voice, but for most ears the first sentence is more direct and understandable, and therefore preferable. Depending on the context, it does a clearer job of telling us what was done and why it was done. Especially if this sentence appears in the "Experimental" section of a report (and thus readers already know that the authors of the report took the photomicrographs), the first sentence neatly represents what the authors actually did—took photomicrographs—and why they did it—to facilitate easy comparison.

Exercise 4

Read the following sentences. Are they using the passive effectively? If there are any errors, rewrite the sentences accordingly.

1. The machine needs to be reset at 10:23, 11:12, and 11:56 every night.
2. The final steps, which need to be finished before the sun sets over the mountains, are going to be completed by Kajuana.
3. The difficult task of measuring minute fluctuations in weight was made easier by the use of a new digital scale.

Answer available at the end of this section.

As we mentioned in **Participles**, the passive voice can also be used following relative pronouns like *that* and *which*.

- I moved into the house **that was built** for me.
- Adrián's dog loves the treats **that are given** to him.
- Brihanna has an album **that was signed** by the Beastie Boys.

In each of these sentences, it is grammatically sound to omit (or *elide*) the pronoun and *to be*. Elision is used with a lot of different

constructions in English; we use it shorten sentences when things are understood. However, we can only use elision in certain situations, so be careful when removing words! You may find these elided sentences more natural:

- I moved into the house **built** for me.
- Adrián's dog loves the treats **given** to him.
- Brihanna has an album **signed** by the Beastie Boys

Additional Practice Exercises

Exercise 5

Convert these passive voice sentences into the active voice:

1. Alana's toes were crushed by the garage door.
2. The passive voice has likely been heard of by you.
3. Rebeca's favorite spot in the lecture hall had been taken by the time she got to class.
4. When the passive voice is overused, you often end up with flat writing.

Answer

The garage door crushed Alana's toes. You've likely heard of the passive voice. Because there's a descriptive phrase, there are a few options when revising this sentence:

- Someone had taken Rebeca's favorite spot in the lecture hall by the time she got to class.
- By the time Rebeca got to class, someone had taken her favorite spot in the lecture hall.

When you overuse the passive voice, you often end up with flat writing.

Exercise 6

Read the following sentences. Are they using the passive effectively? Or should they be rewritten as active sentences?

- Maren was hit by several branches as she slid down the hill.
- A lot of discussion about whether technology is hurting or helping our ability to communicate has been inspired by this increase in technology.
- Listeners are encouraged by the lyrics to cast aside their fear and be themselves.

Answer

Yes, this sentence uses the passive effectively. Since the subject of this sentence—*several branches*—can't actually do anything, it's best to put the emphasis on *Maren*, the person the actions were done to. This sentence does not use the passive well. The passive voice has made the sentence a lot more complicated then it needs to be. The active would read something like this:

- This increase of technology has inspired a lot of discussion about whether technology is hurting or helping our ability to communicate.

Either voice could be appropriate here. If you want to focus on the listeners, the passive voice is correct. If you want to focus on the lyrics, the sentence should be changed to the active voice.

- **Passive:** Listeners are encouraged by the lyrics to cast aside their fear and be themselves.
- **Active:** The lyrics encourage listeners to cast aside their fear and be themselves

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Answers

Exercise 1

This sentence uses the active voice. **Jayden** does the action (**drank**) to the object (**more sodas**). If this sentence were written in the passive it would read "More sodas were drunk by Jayden than by anyone else at the party." This sentence uses the passive voice. The action (**prepared**) was done to the subject of the sentence (**samples**). If this sentence were written in the active it would be something like this: "[Actor] prepared the samples in a clean room before sending them out for further examination." Since we do not know who prepared the samples, the active sentence is incomplete. This sentence uses the active voice. In this case *was* indicates that the sentence happened in the past; it does not indicate the passive voice in this instance. This sentence uses the active voice. In this case *was* is acting as a linking verb. It links **Carlos** with the phrase *very serious scientist*. The introductory phrase to the sentence (When I returned to my room) is in the active voice. The second phrase (my luggage had been stolen) uses the passive voice.

Exercise 2

Enzo completed the process, which was essential for the experiment's success.

- In the passive sentence, the *which*-clause makes the subject of the sentence excessively long. By converting the sentence to the active voice, the clause is moved to the predicate, which makes the sentence easier to understand.

Justin is eating the cake that I worked on all day long.

- The active voice works better in this sentence for the same reasons as sentence one. It is also likely that you would want to put emphasis on Justin in this sentence. After all, he's doing something that is (most likely) inconsiderate.

After you apply the pattern to the fabric, you can start working on the embroidery.

- This sentence is likely found in a set of instructions, which are usually written directly to the reader. Addressing "you" and avoiding the passive voice will make the instructions feel more natural and accessible.

Exercise 3

Antonella would likely want to write in the passive voice. Even if her boss knows she made the error, writing in the passive will draw attention away from that fact. She might say something like this:

- An error was made that ended up costing time and resources. The experiment will have to be repeated with new materials.

Isabel could use either the passive or the active. It depends on the emphasis she wants. The passive voice subtly hints at a mysterious actor. The active voice blatantly states it:

- Liam's keys had been moved when he wasn't looking.
- Something—or someone—had moved Liam's keys when he wasn't looking.

Thiago would want to use the active voice. Since he's apply for a job, he would want to emphasize the fact that he is accomplishing the tasks: the fact that he's doing them is more important than the simple fact that the things were done. He might write something like the following:

- I currently work as a teaching assistant for a linguistics professor. I organize her mail, flagging important items so she knows what needs immediate attention; I aid her in her research, finding interesting articles and studies; and I often help her students when her attention is needed elsewhere.

Exercise 4

Yes. In this case, it doesn't matter who accomplishes the action; it simply needs to be done. If this sentence appears in an academic article, the passive may be even more appropriate, as that style often demands the actor be left out of the sentence. No. This would be better in the active voice. There are a lot of different parts to the sentence, and by converting the sentence to the active voice, they come in a more logical order that is easier to understand:

- Kajuana is going to complete the final steps, which need to be finished before the sun sets over the mountains.

No. This passive construction is very convoluted. An active sentence would serve well here:

- A new digital scale made it easier to measure minute fluctuations in weight.

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11.10: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Modifier Mistakes

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out *what* the writer meant to say. A writer's goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions. The good news is that these errors can be easily fixed.

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.

Incorrect: She wore a bicycle helmet on her head *that was too large*.

Correct: She wore a bicycle helmet *that was too large* on her head.

- Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head was too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person's head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer's meaning.

Look at the following two examples:

Incorrect: They bought a kitten for my brother *they call Shadow*.

Correct: They bought a kitten *they call Shadow* for my brother.

- In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother's name is *Shadow*. That's because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is *kitten*.

Incorrect: The patient was referred to the physician *with stomach pains*.

Correct: The patient *with stomach pains* was referred to the physician.

- The incorrect sentence reads as if it is the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains.

TIP: SIMPLE MODIFIERS

Simple modifiers, such as *only, almost, just nearly,* and *barely* often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Tyler *almost* found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

Repaired: Tyler found *almost* fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

- How do you *almost* find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called “Speed Racer.”
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn’t drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner

Dangling Modifiers

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Video 11.10.1

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A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

Incorrect: *Riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

Correct: As Jane was *riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

- In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader!

Incorrect: *Walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: As Jonas was *walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was *walking home at night*.

- In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

Incorrect: To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

Correct: If we want to win the spelling bee this year, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

- In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do!

TIP: Identifying Dangling Modifiers

The following three steps will help you quickly spot a dangling modifier:

1. Look for an *-ing* modifier at the beginning of your sentence or another modifying phrase:

   Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. (*Painting* is the *-ing* modifier.)

2. Underline the first noun that follows it:

   Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie.

3. Make sure the modifier and noun go together logically. If they do not, it is very likely you have a dangling modifier.

   After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the sentence.

   Painting for three hours at night, Maggie finally finished the kitchen.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following the sentences onto your own sheet of paper to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth

Writing at Work 11.10.1

Modifying phrases, especially verbal phrases (most of the modifiers in the above exercise are verbal phrases because they describe an action), are used often in business writing. In business writing, writers need to describe two actions or processes that occur at the same time. Because much business writing is also abstract, such situations are rife for dangling modifiers to occur. Be alert for dangling or misplaced modifiers in these situations!

Exercise 3

Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers.

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Collaboration available at the end of this section.

Share your results with a classmate.

Exercise 4

See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it. Exchange papers with a classmate, and rewrite your classmate's sentences to correct any misplaced modifiers.

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Answers

Exercise 3

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11.11: Sentence Variety

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.

In this chapter, you will follow a student named Noemi who has written a draft of an essay but needs to refine her writing. 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.

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Video 11.11.1

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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 clearer for the reader, but the result is a choppy, unsophisticated 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.

Tip

Effective writers often implement the "rule of three," which is basically the idea that things that contain three elements are more memorable and more satisfying to readers than any other number. Try to use a series of three when providing examples, grouping adjectives, or generating a list.

Exercise 1

Combine each set of simple sentences into a compound or a complex sentence. Write the combined sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. Shakespeare's writing is still relevant today. He wrote about timeless themes. These themes include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.

2. Prewriting is a vital stage of the writing process. Prewriting helps you organize your ideas. Types of of prewriting include outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping.

3. Walking out in nature can be a very relaxing activity. By nature, I mean the ocean, the woods, mountains, or even a neighborhood with a lot of trees.

4. Reading is like travelling in the mind. A reader can feel like they've gone to Turkey, Nepal, and Belize all in one evening.

5. Vaping can be a dangerous habit, especially if vaping THC. Vitamin E oil is sometimes added to vaping cartriges. Hundres of young people have had permanent lung damage from vaping THC.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Remember, there are many ways to combine sentences, but if you have questions, ask them in class.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Writing at Work

At some point in your career, you will probably find you need to write a cover letter or statement of interest for a job. Writers of cover letters usually find that their initial draft has too much "I" in it, and it sounds a little self-centered, perhaps. While you must use "I" in a cover letter/statement of interest because it is about **you,** varying your sentence structure will allow you to say a lot about yourself without sounding like you are overusing "I."

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.

If you are having trouble figuring out why these sentences are similar, try underlining the subject in each. You will notice that the subject is positioned at the beginning of each sentence—*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.

Noemi wrote an essay about the 2008 government bailout. Read this excerpt from Noemi's essay:

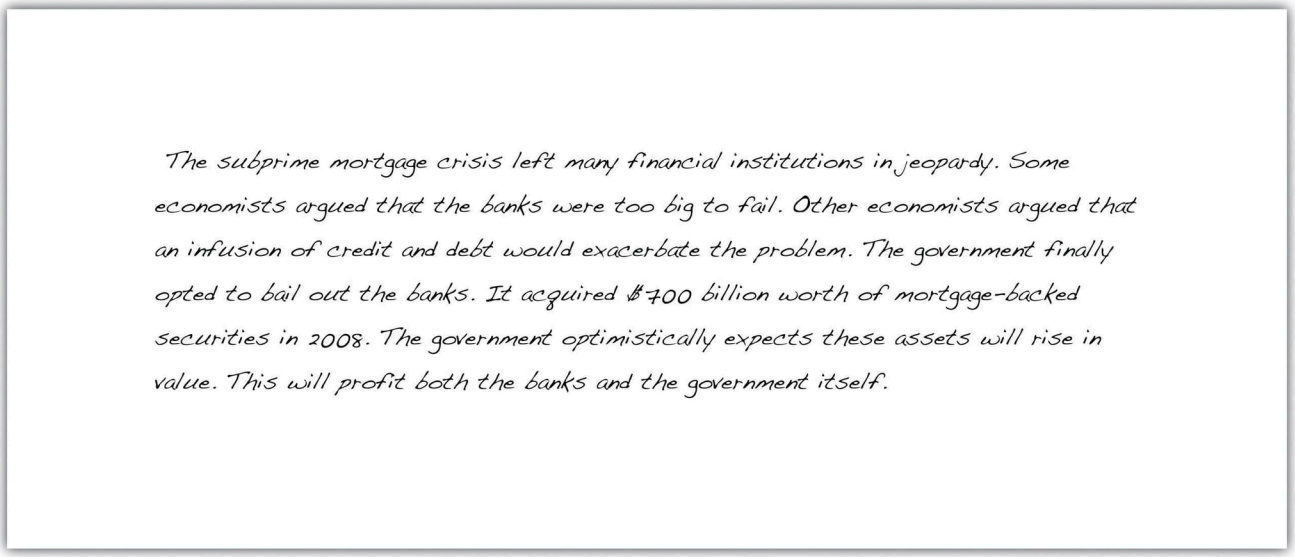


Figure: This section examines several ways to introduce sentence variety at the beginning of sentences, using Noemi's essay as an example.

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*. Notice the difference between 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 for fiction 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 dramatic effect. 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 him under arrest.
- Suddenly, he slammed the door shut and sprinted across the street.

In an academic essay, moving an adverb to the beginning of a sentence serves to vary the rhythm of a paragraph and increase sentence variety.

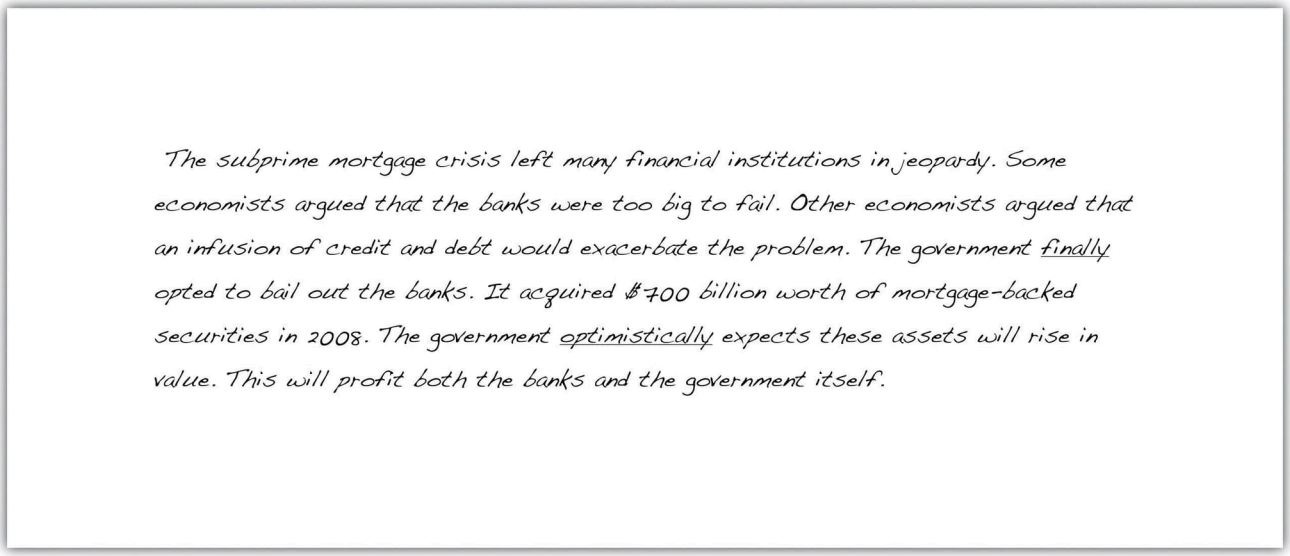
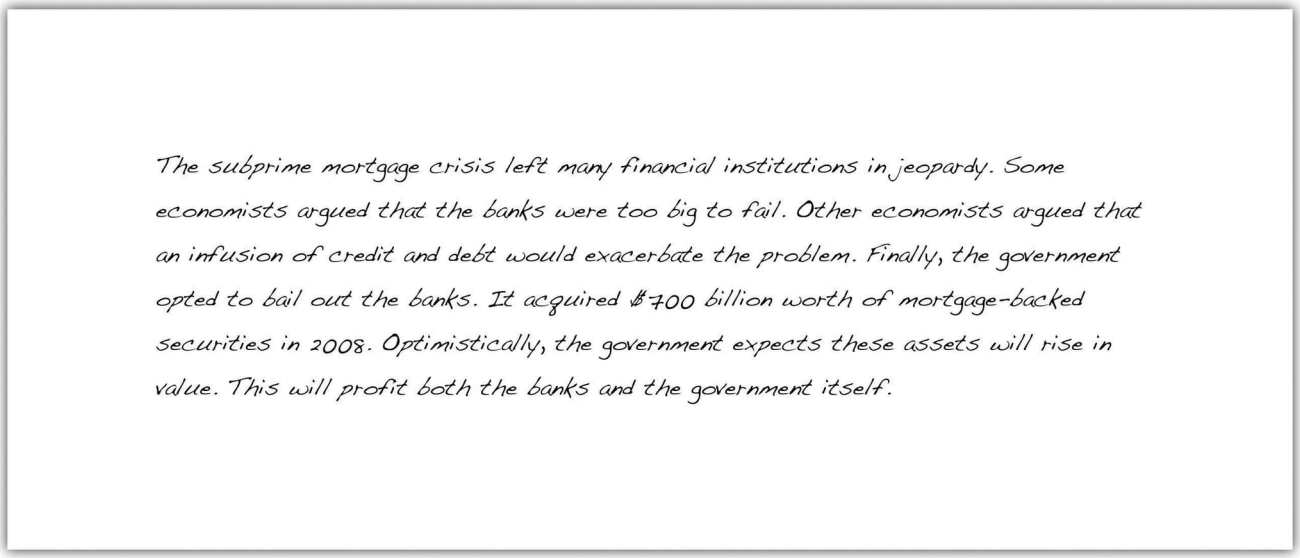


Figure: Noemi has used two adverbs in her essay that could be moved to the beginning of their respective sentences. Notice how the following revised version creates a more varied paragraph:



Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, 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. The firefighters bravely tackled the blaze, but they were beaten back by flames.

4. Mayor Danielson privately acknowledged that the budget was excessive and that further discussion was needed.

5. The dancer lithely glided across the stage before she began the pas-de-deux.

Figure:

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. 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).

Common Prepositions

above	beneath	into	till
across	beside	like	toward
against	between	near	under
after	beyond	off	underneath
among	by	on	until
around	despite	over	up
at	except	past	with
before	for	since	without
behind	from	through	
below	inside	throughout	

Read the following sentence:

- The child opened his birthday present **with excitement**.

In this sentence, 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 child opened his birthday present **with extreme excitement**.

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:

- **With excitement,** the child opened his birthday present.

Notice that when the prepositional phrase is moved to the beginning of the sentence, the emphasis shifts from the subject—the child—to the manner in which the child is opening the present. 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 bold 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.
- The teenagers exchanged drugs and money **under the railway bridge**.
- **Under the railway bridge**, the teenagers exchanged drugs and money.

Prepositional phrases are useful in any type of writing. Take another look at Noemi's essay on the government bailout.

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Figure: Now read the revised version.

Throughout 2007 and 2008, the subprime mortgage crisis worsened, leaving many financial institutions in jeopardy. According to some economists, the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. Despite public objections, the government finally opted to bail out the banks. Since the 2008 bill passed, it has acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

The underlined words are all prepositional phrases. Notice how they add additional information to the text and provide a sense of flow to the essay, making it less choppy and more pleasurable to read.

Unmovable Prepositional Phrases

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. It dangles because it is not right next to what it describes. Just like a verbal phrase or any modifying phrase, a prepositional phrase needs to be placed right next to what it describes. To determine whether a prepositional phrase can be moved, we must determine the meaning of the sentence.

Overuse of Prepositional Phrases

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.

In addition, writers can sometimes transform prepositional phrases into adjectives when the prepositional phrase originally described a noun.

Sentence with too many prepositional phrases (in bold): Oftentimes, the governor revises the California budget **in May** when the revenue numbers **from taxes** are in, but that only leaves two months **until the end of the fiscal year** to change spending.

Sentence with some prepositional phrases (in bold) turned into adjectives (in blue): Oftentimes, the governor revises the California budget **in May** when the tax revenue numbers are in, but that only leaves the the final two months **of the fiscal year** to change spending.

Exercise 3

On a separate piece of paper, move prepositional phrases around in the following paragraph to add variety or add some to appropriate places in the text.

Suburban economic development largely depends on three factors: proximity to a major economic center, transportation access, and the education level of the local workforce. The most successful suburban economic centers are located at the crossroads of two major interstates and have public and private transportation options available. It may be in the best interest of suburban areas within 30 miles of an urban area and looking to expand economically to invest in public transportation (light rail and/or bus) despite their need for subsidies. Economic analysis may show that a combination of local, state, and federal subsidies will make such investment feasible given the amount of projected growth. Even if the full amount of growth does not materialize, the greater ease with which local residents can commute to urban centers may allow for population growth and more moderate economic expansion of the suburban area and allow it to develop into a smaller hub with its own sphere of influence.

Collaboration available at the end of this section.

Writing at Work

The overuse of prepositional phrases often occurs when our thoughts are jumbled and we are unsure how concepts or ideas relate to one another. If you are preparing a report or a proposal, take the time to organize your thoughts in an outline before writing a rough draft. Read the draft aloud, either to yourself or to a colleague, and identify areas that are rambling or unclear. If you notice that a particular part of your report contains several sentences over twenty words (or the equivalent of two lines), you should double check that particular section to make certain that it is coherent and does not contain unnecessary prepositional phrases. Reading aloud sometimes helps detect unclear and wordy sentences. You can also ask a colleague to paraphrase your main points to ensure that the meaning is clear.

Starting a Sentence by Inverting Subject and Verb

Figure: Unsplash

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. We can apply this method to an academic essay. Take another look at Naoei's paragraph.

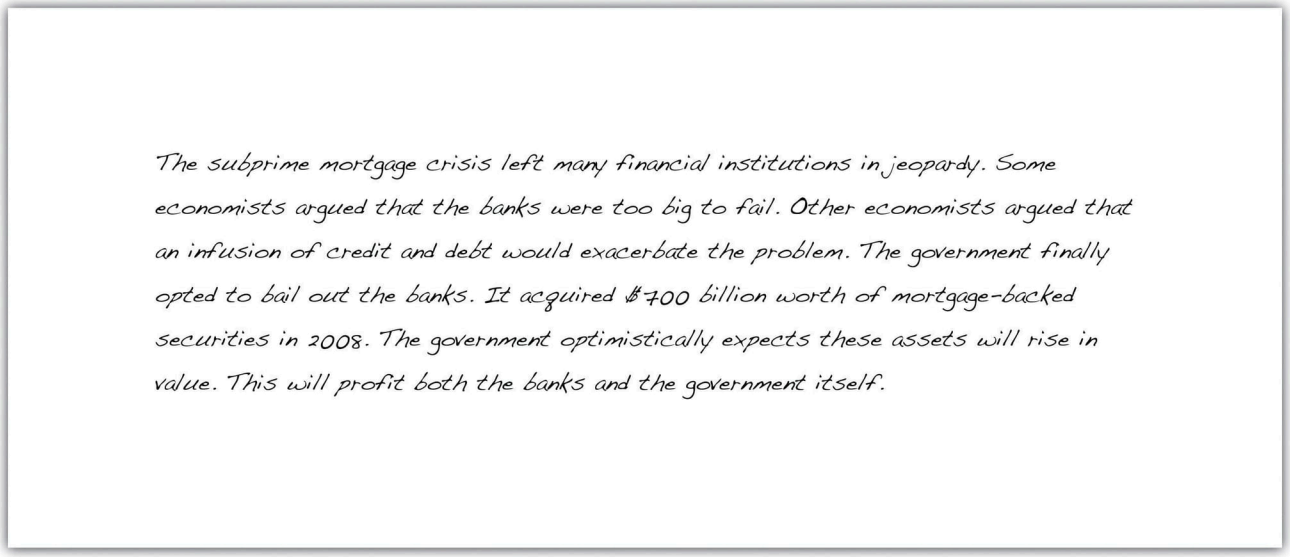


Figure: To emphasize the subject in certain sentences, Noemi can invert the traditional sentence structure. Read her revised paragraph:

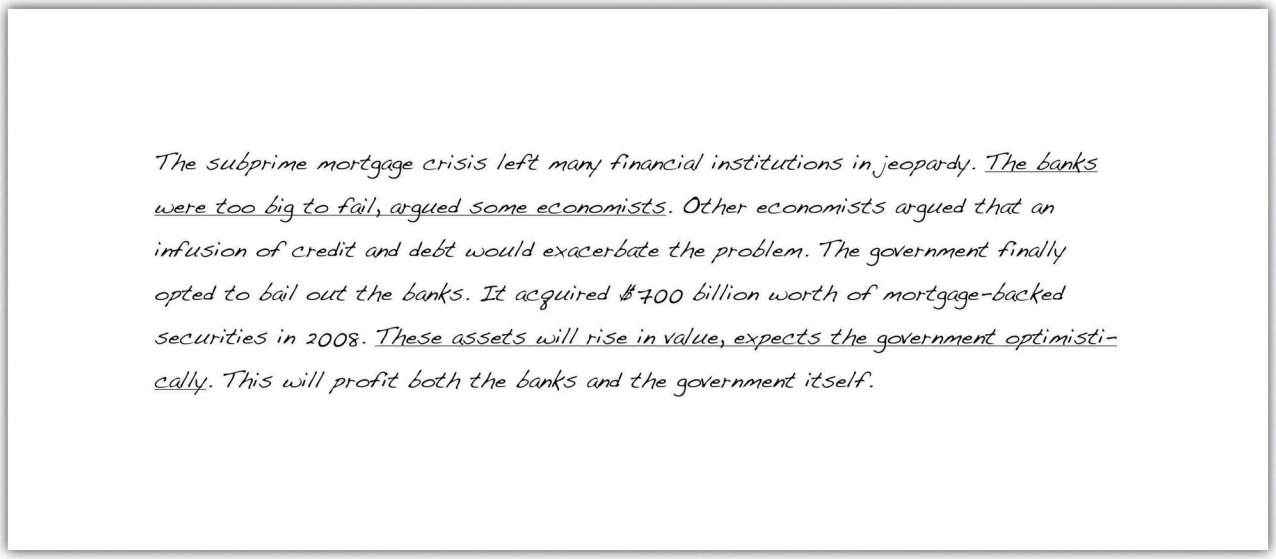


Figure:).

Exercise 4

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

Figure:

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 (see "Modifiers" section of this chapter). 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 one of the subjects (*He*). 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:

1. 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.

2. 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**.

Tip:

A common mistake when combining sentences using the *–ing* verb form is to misplace the modifier so that it is not logically connected to the rest of the sentence. This creates a dangling modifier. For more about how to avoid this, see the "Modifiers" page earlier in this chapter.

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 next to what it modifies in order to avoid a dangling modifier.

Using *–ing* or *–ed* modifiers can help streamline your writing by drawing obvious connections between two sentences. Take a look at how Noemi might use modifiers in her paragraph.

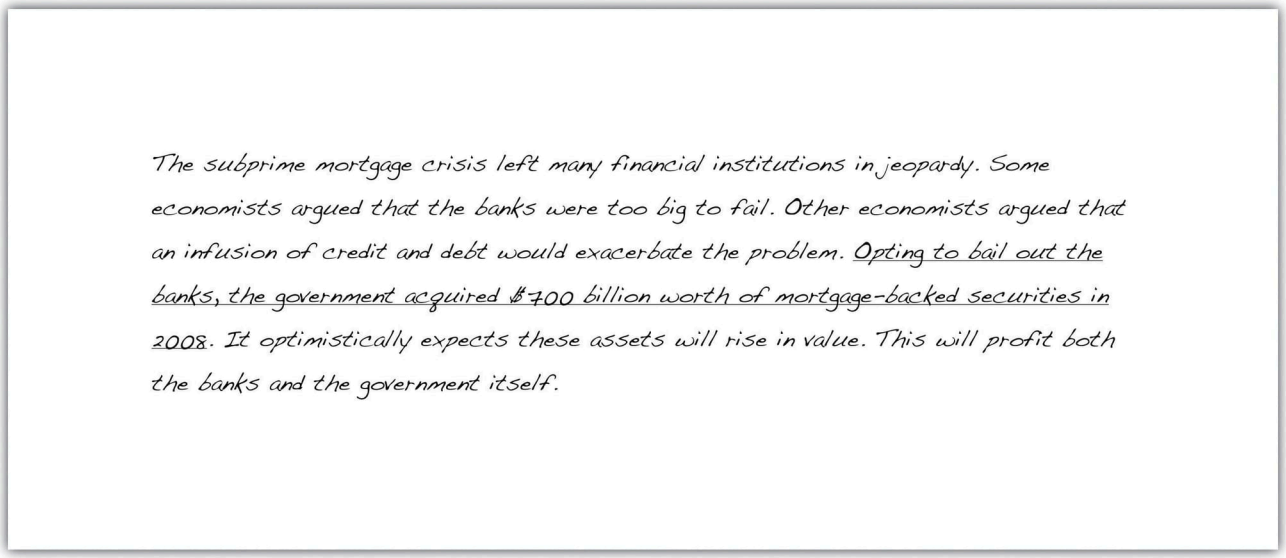


Figure: to draw a connection between the government's decision to bail out the banks and the result of that decision—the acquisition of the mortgage-backed securities.

Exercise 5

Combine the following sentences so that you have a core clause and a modifying phrase beginning with -ed.

1. Xiana was floored by winning the grand prize. She didn't know what to say.

2. Danielle was sad that her cat passed away. She consoled herself remembering the time that he had ruined her computer.

3. They were shocked at the comedian's punch line. They didn't think it was funny at all.

4. He had mellowed out after the argument. He realized that going to the beach relaxed him.

5. The football was fumbled at the goal line. The football squirted around between players on the opposing teams.

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. Take a look at how Noemi might incorporate relative clauses into her essay.

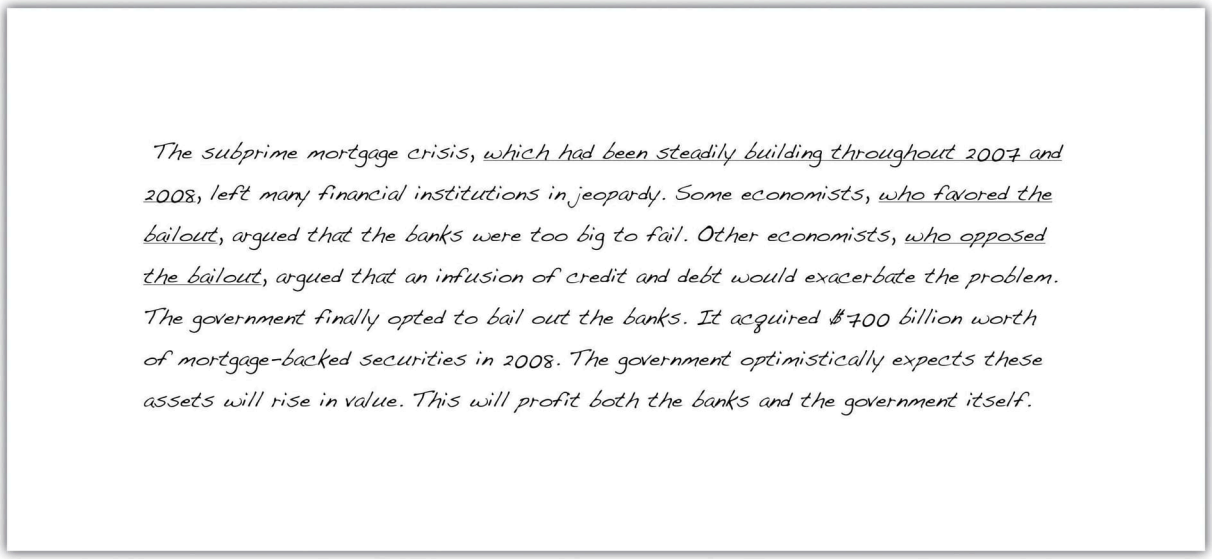


Figure: Notice how the underlined relative clauses can be removed from Naomi's essay without changing the meaning of the sentence.

Tip

To check the punctuation of relative clauses, assess whether or not the clause can be taken out of the sentence without changing its meaning. If the relative clause is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, it should be placed in commas. If the relative clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence, it does not require commas around it.

Exercise 6

Join the following sentences by creating relative clauses.

1. Uncle Bob is a sailor. He has been everywhere.

2. Aunt Edna paints portraits. You met her last year.

3. My new car broke down on the bridge. The car cost a bundle.

4. Save the seat for me. The seat is closest to the front.

5. We had a lovely hotel in Ixtapa. We honeymooned there.

6. Joe's cat was mistaken for a rat. Its tail is hairless.

Joining Ideas Using an Appositive

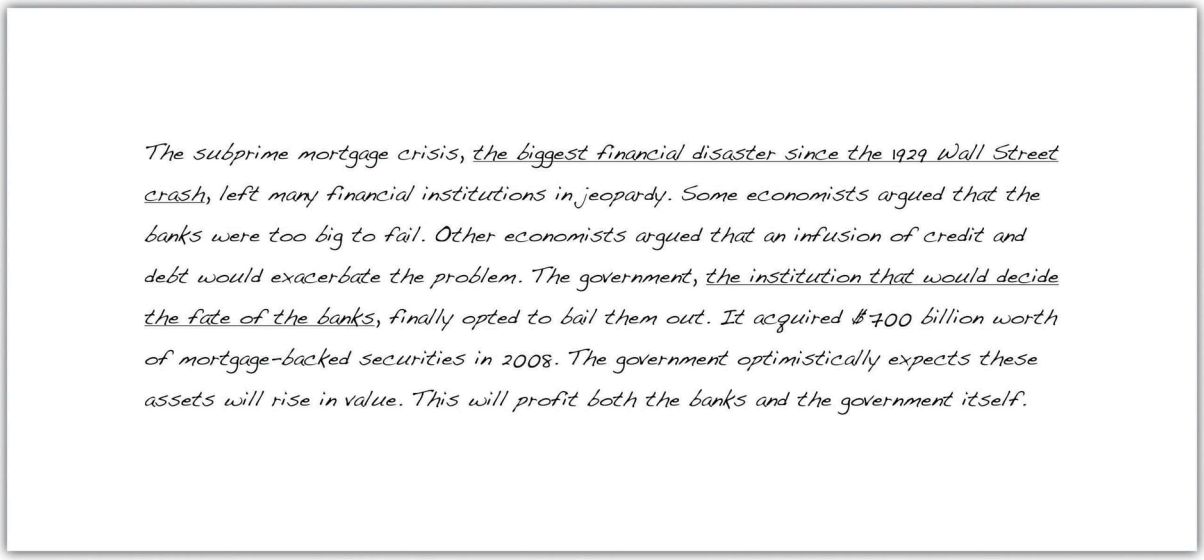
A noun phrase appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

- **Original sentences:** Greta Thunberg is a 16-year-old environmental activist. She is from Sweden.
- **Revised sentence:** Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old environmental activist, is from Sweden.

In the revised sentence, *"a 16-year-old environmental activist*" is an appositive because it renames Greta Thunberg. 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:** No one expected that Scott, a poorly trained athlete, would 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 of commas. Take a look at the way Noemi uses appositives to include additional facts in her essay.



Exercise 7

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.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 8

Children's stories are deliberately written in short, simple sentences to avoid confusion. Most sentences are constructed using the standard subject-verb-object format. Choose a children's story that is suitable for eight- to ten-year-olds. Rewrite a chapter of the story so that it appeals to a slightly older age group, by editing for sentence variety. Experiment with the techniques you learned on this page, including the three different ways to vary sentence structure at the beginning of a sentence and the three different ways to connect ideas between sentences. Compare the revised chapter with the original version and consider how sentence variety can be used to target a particular audience.

Writing at Work

In addition to varying sentence structure, consider varying the types of sentences you are using in a report or other workplace document. Most sentences are declarative, but a carefully placed question, exclamation, or command can pique colleagues' interest, even if the subject material is fairly dry. Imagine that you are writing a budget analysis. Beginning your report with a rhetorical question, such as "Where is our money going?" or "How can we increase sales?" encourages people to continue reading to find out the answers. Although they should be used sparingly in academic and professional writing, questions or commands are effective rhetorical devices.

Contributors and Attributions

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Answers

Exercise 1

Exercise 3

Compare what you did with a classmate.

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11.12: Relative Clauses

A *clause* is a group of related words that has a subject and a verb. A *relative clause* provides additional information about a noun, pronoun, or an entire clause that is already in the sentence, by telling which one, what kind of, how many, or more about the nature of something.

YouTube Video

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Video 11.12.1

RELATIVE CLAUSES in 4 Steps. **Authored by:** Insights to English. Standard YouTube License.

Rules for Using Relative Clauses

Relative clauses use a relative pronoun to refer to a pronoun or noun that appears earlier in the sentence. They are sometimes also referred to as adjective clauses although that is a broader category of modifier, of which relative clauses are a part. Relative pronouns can only be used to refer to something earlier in that same sentence. To avoid confusion, a relative clause almost always appears immediately following the noun, pronoun, or clause it modifies. It must refer to something earlier in the same sentence. Sentences cannot begin with relative pronouns, which begin relative clauses.

Rule 1:

Relative clauses should begin with a relative pronoun that refers to the correct type of noun (see table).

Use the Correct Word

Relative Pronoun	Refers To	Replaces	Examples
who	people	I, we, you, he, she, they (as subjects of the sentence)	Uncle Jeff, who is a sailor, has been everywhere. (Uncle Jeff is a sailor. He has been everywhere.)
whom	people	me, us, you, her, him, them (as objects of verbs or prepositions)	Aunt Edna, whom you met last year, paints portraits. (Aunt Edna paints portraits. You met her last year.)

Relative Pronoun	Refers To	Replaces	Examples
whose	possessives	mine, our, your, his, her, their, its	Joe's cat, whose tail is hairless, was mistaken for a rat. (Joe's cat was mistaken for a rat. Its tail was hairless.)
which	things	it, they, them	My new car, which cost a bundle, broke down on the bridge. (My new car broke down on the bridge. It cost a bundle.)
that	people or things	I, we, you, he, she, it, they, me, us, him, her, them	Sarah wants to buy the sofa that is in the window of the department store. (Sarah wants to buy the sofa. It is in the window of the department store.) Save the seat that is closest to the front for me. (Save the seat for me. It is closest to the front.)
when	time	then	Last week, when we were shopping, I bought lunch. (Last week, I bought lunch. We were shopping then.)
where	place	there	We had a lovely hotel in Ixtapa, where we honeymooned. (We had a lovely hotel in Ixtapa. We honeymooned there.)

Rule 2:

A relative clause can begin or end with a preposition, but not both.

Correct: She wore an outfit for which she received many compliments.

Sort of okay: She wore an outfit that she received many compliments on.

Incorrect: She wore an outfit on which she received many compliments on.

Rule 3:

If a preposition is in the sentence when it's taken apart, then there should be a preposition in the relative clause.

Taken apart:

She wore a dress.

She received many compliments for it.

Together:

She wore an outfit for which she received many compliments.

Relative Clauses and Comma Usage

Whether a comma is needed before the relative pronoun depends on whether the relative clause is **restrictive** or **nonrestrictive.**

A **restrictive** reference means that the thing or person the pronoun refers to is part of a group.

A **nonrestrictive** reference means that the thing or people the pronoun refers to is all of a group.

Rule 4:

When the situation is restrictive, do not use a comma before the relative pronoun.

For instance:

- The place **where** they were from was very hot and dry. (It's one of many places.)
- The people **who** were late had taken mass transit. (Not all of the people were late.)
- The tools **that** were stolen were in an unlocked box. (Some of the tools were stolen)

Rule 5:

"That" is always restrictive.

Rule 6:

When the situation is nonrestrictive, use a comma before the relative pronoun.

For instance:

- South America**, where** they are from, has many different cultures. (This implies that they are all from South America.)
- The people**, who** were late, had taken mass transit. (This implies all the people were late.)
- The tools**, which** were stolen, were in an unlocked box. (All of the tools were stolen.)

Rule 7:

"Which" is always nonrestrictive.

Exercise 1

For each of these sentence sets:

- *First fill in the blank on line **a** with a personal pronoun that makes it a complete sentence.*
- *Then, fill in the blank on line **b** with the relative pronoun that makes it a relative clause.*
- Refer to the above table listing personal and relative pronouns if you need to.

Compare your answers with a classmate.

Example:

a Poodles are smart dogs. <u>They</u> make great companions.

b Poodles, <u>which</u> make great companions, are smart dogs.

1. a The man got a ticket. _____ parked his car next to mine.

b The man _____ parked his car next to mine got a ticket.

2. a Dr. Thompson enjoys baseball. _____ teaches geology.

b Dr. Thompson, _____ teaches geology, enjoys baseball.

3. a This book is available in our library. I ordered _____.

b This book, _____ I ordered, is available in our library.

4. a The partner also earned an A. You worked with _____.

b This partner with _____ you worked also earned an A.

5. a He moved to Arizona. The climate was drier _____.

b He moved to Arizona, _____ the climate was drier.

6. a The little girl played ball. _____ braids were tucked in her cap.

b The little girl, _____ braids were tucked in her cap, played ball.

7. a I tattled to _____.

b To _____ did you tattle?

Exercise 2

Combine the following sentence sets to create one sentence with a relative clause. Ensure the punctuation is correct. 1. My cell phone battery is starting to die. My cell phone shuts down at 15%. 2. The Democratic presidential debate was aired on Tuesday night. Saturday Night Live parodies the presidential debates. 3. I am going to Phoenix this summer. It is very hot in Phoenix. 4. Rachel and Rochelle watch horror movies. Horror movies terrify and thrill them. 5. Violence seems to be everywhere on the media. Media violence makes people feel more in danger than they actually are. 6. The children were playing baseball in the street. Some of the children scattered when the window shattered.

Exercise 3

Find two sentences in your own writing that have relative clauses. Write them down. If they are incorrect, fix them following the original. If they are correct, just write down the originals.

Alternatively, find two places in your writing where you name something at the end of the sentence and repeat that name at the beginning of the next sentence. This is a good place to combine your sentences using a relative clause.

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11.13: Key Takeaways

- Use parentheses, dashes, and hyphens in your writing to help with style and voice -- but use them sparingly.
- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers and is important for your credibility at work.
- Connotations of words may be positive, neutral, or negative.
- Slang, clichés, and overly general words should be avoided in academic writing.
- Strong sentence focus reduces wordiness and creates clearer and more concise sentences.
- Coordination joins sentences with related and equal ideas whereas subordination joins sentences with related but unequal ideas.
- Sentences can be coordinated using either a coordinating conjunction and a comma or a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon.
- Subordinate sentences are characterized by the use of a subordinate conjunction.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand and, thus, distract the reader.
- Sentence variety reduces repetition in a piece of writing and adds emphasis to important points in the text.
- Sentence variety can be introduced to the beginning of sentences by starting a sentence with an adverb, starting a sentence with a prepositional phrase, or by inverting the subject and verb.
- Combine ideas, using modifiers, relative clauses, or appositives, to achieve sentence variety.

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12: GRAMMAR

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12.1: Grammar Introduction

Learning Objectives

learning objectives

- Understand basic sentence structure and how to arrange modifying phrases and clauses around a basic sentence structure.
- Understand verb usage and subject-verb agreement.
- Understand nouns and many grammar constructions related to nouns.
- Understand the rules behind various types of punctuation, especially commas.

This chapter explain and provides practice in the rules of English grammar, from a basic to an advanced level. Almost every student will need to practice some of the grammar in this chapter, but what needs practice will vary by person. Some people will need to practice more of the grammar skills. Consult with your instructor about which grammar skills they think will benefit you most. The skills are generally introduced in the order you would learn them in school. Don't be embarrassed if you feel you should already know some of these rules and skills. Some people miss some of them for a number of reasons in school, or it just didn't "click" the first time around. Other people were never taught them in the first place for a variety of reasons. In terms of grammar, learn what you need, and then apply it to your own writing. We have tried to keep the exercise examples at a level of what you are more likely to encounter in your college reading and writing. This prevents them from being overly simplistic and, thus, inapplicable to your own, more sophisticated writing.

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12.2: Spelling

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. Even if using a spell check tool, 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, or it can cause you to lose credibility as a writer. Computer spell checkers are useful editing tools, but they can never replace human knowledge of spelling rules, homonyms, and commonly misspelled words.

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.

1) Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay* like “neighbor” or “weigh.”

- achieve, niece, alien -- follow rule
- receive, deceive -- exception

2) When words end in a consonant plus *y*, drop the *y* and add an *i* before adding another ending.

- happy + er = happier -- follows rule
- cry + ed = cried -- follows rule

3) When words end in a vowel plus *y*, keep the *y* and add the ending.

- delay + ed = delayed -- follows rule

Note: Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: *day*, *lay*, *say*, *pay* = *daily*, *laid*, *said*, *paid*

4) 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

5) 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

6) For many words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add –s when using the plural form.

- photo + s = photos
- soprano + s = sopranos

7) Add *–es* to words that end in s, *ch*, *sh*, and *x*.

- church + es = churches
- fax + es = faxes

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Video 12.2.1

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Video 12.2.1

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 (memory) devices to remember the correct spelling of words.** Mnemonic devices, or memory

techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or songs or practices that help you remember. For example, the 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 or *people* as pe-o-ple 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 dictionary that will work for you.
4. **Use your computer's spell checker**. The spell check 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 your 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.

Review the common spelling rules explained on this page. Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules on this page 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 7.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

1. Copy each word a few times and underline the problem area.

2. Copy the words (by hand) onto flash cards and have a friend test you.

Commonly Misspelled Words		
a**c**ross	a**dd**ress	ans**w**er
arg**u**ment	a**thl**ete	beg**inn**ing
beha**vi**or	cal**e**nd**a**r	con**sci**ence
crow**ded**	def**in**ite	d**es**cribe
desp**er**ate	di**ffere**nt	dis**app**oint
disa**pp**rove	do**es**n't	eig**hth**
emba**rr**ass	envir**on**ment	exa**gg**erate

fam**ili**ar	fina**lly**	gover**nm**ent
gramm**ar**	hei**gh**t	**ill**egal
immedi**ate**ly	import**ant**	in**teg**ration
in**tell**igent	inte**res**t	inte**r**fere
jew**el**ry	jud**gm**ent	knowle**d**ge
maint**ain**	math**e**matics	me**a**nt
ne**ce**ssary	nerv**ous**	o**cc**asion
opin**ion**	opt**i**mist	

Exercises

Exercise 1: Edit and Correct Misspelled Words 1

Identify and correct the ten misspelled words in the following paragraph.

It is hard to imagine that Joanne Rowling, better known as J.K. Rowling, was a struggleing writer once. The best-selling author of the *Harry Potter* fantasy serys had to go through serious hardship to get where she is now. Although she lovd books from a young age, her teenage years were quite unhappy due to her mother falling ill with multiple sclerosis. Her mother dyed ten years later, while Rowling was writeing her first book, which had a huge impact on her writing. While writing *Harry Potter*, Rowling got marryed, had a miscarryage, suffered from alleged domestic abuse, fell pregnant, and ended up separateing from her husband. Without a job and haveing to care for an infant, Rowling became clinically depressed and even contemplated suicide. Eventually she was forced to sign up for welfare benefits. Her big break only came after many rejections, when the daughter of the chairman of a publishing house read the first chapter of *Harry Potter* and immediatly wanted to read more. Even then, Rowling was advised to get a day job as there was no money in children books, but thanks to fans of her work she quickly rose to stardom.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 2: Edit and Correct Misspelled Words 2

Identify and correct the 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 16th 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 never have happened; they though Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Writing at Work

In today's job market, writing emails has become a means by which many people find employment. Emails to prospective employers require thoughtful word choice, accurate spelling, and perfect punctuation. Employers' inboxes are inundated with countless emails daily. If even the subject line of an email contains a spelling error, it will likely be overlooked, and someone else's email will take priority.

The best thing to do after you proofread an email to an employer and run the spell check is to have an additional set of eyes go over it with you; one of your teachers may be able to read the email and give you suggestions for improvement. Most colleges and universities have writing and career centers, both of which may also be able to assist you.

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Answers

Exercise 1: Edit and Correct Misspelled Words 1

It is hard to imagine that Joanne Rowling, better known as J.K. Rowling, was a struggling writer once. The best-selling author of the *Harry Potter* fantasy series had to go through serious hardship to get where she is now. Although she loved books from a young age, her teenage years were quite unhappy due to her mother falling ill with multiple sclerosis. Her mother died ten years later, while Rowling was writing her first book, which had a huge impact on her writing. While writing *Harry Potter*, Rowling got married, had a miscarriage, suffered from alleged domestic abuse, fell pregnant and ended up separating from her husband. Without a job and having to care for an infant, Rowling became clinically depressed and even contemplated suicide. Eventually she was forced to sign up for welfare benefits. Her big break only came after many rejections, when the daughter of the chairman of a publishing house read the first chapter of *Harry Potter* and immediately wanted to read more. Even then, Rowling was advised to get a day job as there was no money in children's books, but thanks to fans of her work she quickly rose to stardom.

Exercise 2: Edit and Correct Misspelled Words 2

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 beginnings stretch back to the 16th century when it was founded by the Dutch, who originally called it "Breuckelen." Immediately 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. Finally 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 occasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan now became much easier. Eventually, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its separate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. However, in some people's opinion, the integration into New York City should never have happened; they thought Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

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12.3: Word Order and Sentence Structure

For a variety of reasons, you may need some extra practice when writing in standard, or formal, English. People remember what they use, and if you don't use standard English most of the time when you speak, it is likely it will not flow out naturally when you write. Many students who don't use standard English on a day-to-day basis (and even some who do) make similar kinds of errors. Even if you have been speaking English for a long time, you may not feel as confident in your written English skills as you do with your speaking skills. We will start out with the sentence core because everything builds from that.

Components of a Sentence

Every language has its own sentence structure and rules for what is included. The basic structure of sentences in English is S-V-O, or subject-verb-object. This means that, in most cases, the subject always appears before the verb.

Clearly written, complete sentences require key information: a subject, a verb and a complete idea. (Some verbs (transitive verbs) require and object (O) and some verbs (intransitive verbs) don't to make the complete idea. Most verbs are transitive. A sentence needs to make sense on its own. Sometimes, complete sentences are also called independent clauses. A clause is a group of words that may make up a sentence. An independent clause is a group of words that may stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. The following sentence has three independent clauses (in brackets).

[We went to the store,] [we bought the ingredients on our list,] and then [we went home].

All complete sentences have at least one independent clause. You can identify an independent clause by reading it on its own and looking for the subject and the verb.

Identifying the Verb

Types of Verbs

It may be easiest to first identify the verb in a sentence even though it generally appears after a subject. A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs. A verbs that connects the subject to an action is called an action verb. An action verb answers the question what is the subject doing? In the following sentences, the bold words are action verbs.

The dog **barked** at the jogger.

He **gave** a short speech before we ate.

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a linking verb because it links the subject to a describing word. In the following sentences, the bold words are linking verbs.

The coat **was** old and dirty.

The clock **seemed** broken.

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas a linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject. A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs.

Action verb: The boy **looked** for his glove.

Linking verb: The boy **looked** tired.

A third type of verb you may use as you write is a helping verb. Helping verbs are verbs that are used with the main verb to describe a mood or tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of be, do, or have. The word can is also used as a helping verb.

The restaurant **is** known for its variety of dishes.

We **have** seen that movie three times.

Exercise 1

Copy each sentence onto your own sheet of paper and underline the verb(s) twice. Name the type of verb(s) used in the sentence in the space provided (LV, HV, or V).

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside. _____
2. We have not eaten dinner yet. _____
3. It took four people to move the broken-down car. _____
4. The book was filled with notes from class. _____
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages. _____
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail. _____
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice. _____
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces. _____.

The Time Test

If you need to identify the verb in a subject, you can apply the time test, which is:

- Changing the tense of the sentences
- Observing which words change. The words that change are the verb.

Example:

Present tense: Dax, my German Shepherd, **loves** to run at the beach.

Past tense: Dax, my German Shepherd, **loved** to run at the beach.

We can see that "loves" changed to "loved," so "loves" is the verb in the original sentence.

In college classes, though, we tend to write more complicated sentences than this. There may be more than one subject and/or verb, the subject may be compound, or it may be embedded into a pronoun. Verbal phrases (which can easily be confused with verbs) may also add description in a sentence. How to tell what the verb is? Apply the time test!

Examples:

- **Present tense:** Hauling a load of wood, the truck overturns and wood flies everywhere.
- **Past tense:** Hauling a load of wood, the truck overturned and wood flew everywhere.
- The verbs are "overturns" and "flies."

- **Present (progressive) tense:** I am hurrying around the house, trying to gather everything I need before I have to catch my plane.
- **Past tense:** I hurried around the house, trying to gather everything I needed before I had to catch my plane.
- The verbs are "am hurrying," "need," and "have."

- **Past/past progressive:** My friend, whom I have known for fifteen years, was very supportive during this time.
- **Future/future progressive:** My friend, whom I will have known for fifteen years, will be very supportive during this time.
- The verbs are "have known" and "was". Notice that, in this case, the subject and the verb are separated by an intervening descriptive clause with commas around it.

- **Past tense:** Daria and Oswaldo played hockey.
- **Present tense:** Daria and Oswaldo play hockey.
- The verb is "played."

Identifying the Subject

When you read a sentence, you may first look for the subject, or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a noun or a pronoun. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are *I*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *you*, *they*, and *we*. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined once.

Malik is the project manager for this project. He will give us our assignments.

In these sentences, the subject is a person: *Malik*. The pronoun *He* replaces and refers back to *Malik*.

The computer lab is where we will work. It will be open twenty-four hours a day.

In the first sentence, the subject is a place: *computer lab*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* substitutes for *computer lab* as the subject.

The project will run for three weeks. It will have a quick turnaround.

In the first sentence, the subject is a thing: *project*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* stands in for the *project*.

Once you have identified the verb, you can then easily identify the subject by asking "who or what does the verb?" Sometimes the subject may be compound (more than one), and sometimes the subject may be separated from the verb.The following examples refer to the example sentences in the time test, above.

Examples:

Who loves to run at the beach? Dax does. Dax is the subject of the sentence.

What was hauling a load of wood? **What** flew everywhere? The truck and wood are the subjects in the sentences.

Who was hurrying around the house? **Who** was gathering everything they needed? **Who** needed to catch a plane? The subject of each of these is "I," but notice there are three "I"s in the original sentence, so each of them would be a subject.

Who was very supportive? **Who** has known the friend? **"**My friend" and "I" are the subjects. This one is tricky because of the construction of the original sentence. There are actually two clauses (subject-verb units) in the sentence. We can separate them to make it easier to figure out the subjects. We can transform the original sentence into: "My friend was very supportive during this time" and "I have known her for fifteen years." Examining each of the sentences separately makes it easier to figure out.

Who played hockey? Daria and Oswaldo. There is one compound subject in this sentence.

Sometimes, a whole phrase will function as a subject. Consider the example below.

To write an award-winning novel is my ultimate goal. When applying the time test, we would discover that "is" is the verb. We would then ask ourselves, "**what** is my ultimate goal?". The answer is the subject: **To write an award-winning novel**.

Exercise 2

On a separate piece of paper, write the following sentences and write "V" above the subject(s) and "S" above the subject(s).

1. The sun never completely disappears during the summer in the Arctic.

2. Following her final exam, Doreen picked up her sister from the airport.

3. She was feeling blue until her favorite song played on her phone.

4. Then she began dancing around the room; her day improved greatly after that.

5. Music can modify our mood greatly, and we can change our mood by listening to different kinds of music with different tempos and in varying keys.

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Basic Sentence Structures

Subject + Verb

The most basic sentence structure in English is a subject plus a verb. A subject performs the action in the sentence, and the verb identifies the action. Keep in mind that in some languages, such as Spanish and Italian, an obvious subject does not always perform the action in a sentence; the subject is often implied by the verb. However, in English, this only happens in command (imperative) style sentences when the implied you tell and implied "you" (someone else) to do something. Otherwise, every sentence in English must have a subject and a verb to express a complete thought.

subject + verb
Samantha sleeps.

Not all sentences are as simple as a subject plus a verb. To form more complex sentences, writers build upon this basic structure. Adding a prepositional phrase to the basic sentence creates a more complex sentence. A preposition is a part of speech that shows a relation between a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. Preposition also begin prepositional phrases. In this case, they must be followed by a noun or a noun phrase. If you can identify a preposition, you will be able to identify a prepositional phrase.

subject + verb + prepositional phrase
Samantha sleeps on the couch.

On is the preposition. *On the couch* is the prepositional phrase.

Common Prepositions		
about	beside	off
above	between	on
across	by	over
after	during	through
against	except	to
along	for	toward
among	from	under
around	in	until
at	into	up

Common Prepositions		
before	like	with
behind	of	without

Tip: Be careful when using "on" as a preposition. It is overused when speaking and many times another preposition is the correct one to use. On basically means "on top of." Many times people mistakenly use "on" in place of "about" (i.e., We talked about something) or "of." For a listing of the meanings of each of the above prepositions, please check your favorite dictionary or dictionary app.

Exercise 3

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and underline the prepositional phrases.

1. Linda and Javier danced under the stars.
2. Each person has an opinion about the topic.
3. The fans walked through the gates.
4. Jamyra ran around the track.
5. Maria celebrated her birthday in January.
6. Collin finished his homework at the library on campus.

Subject + Verb + Compliment

A compliment to a verb can be a noun or an adjective. In both cases, the comliment follows a linking verb. Here are some examples with the linking verb italicized and the complement bolded:

Computers *are* **tools.** (Noun compliment)

Computers *are* **expensive.** (Adjective compliment)

Subject + Verb + Adverb

In this case, an adverb (which describes how something was done) follows the main verb.

Compuers *calculate* **quickly** (adverb)

Subject + Verb + Direct Object

Another sentence structure that is important to understand is subject + verb + object. There are two types of objects: direct objects and indirect objects.

A direct object receives the action of the verb.

subject + verb + direct object
Janice writes a letter.

The letter directly receives the action of the verb *writes*.

Tip:

A quick way to find the direct object is to ask *what? or* who?

Sentence: Maurice kicked the ball.

What did Maurice kick? The direct object, *ball*.

Sentence: Maurice kicked Tom by accident.

Who did Maurice kick? The direct object (receiving the kick) ,*Tom.*

Subject + Verb + Indirect Object

An indirect object does not receive the action of the verb

subject + verb + indirect object
Janice writes me a letter

The action (*writes)* is performed for or to the indirect object (*me).*

Tip:

Even though the indirect object is not found after a preposition in English, it an be discovered by asking *to whom?* or *for whom?* after the verb.

Sentence: Dad baked the children some cookies.

For whom did Dad bake the cookies? The indirect object, *children.*

Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, identify the subject (S), verb (V), direct object (DO), and indirect object (IO) in the following sentences using the abbreviations here in the list.

1. Captain Kirk told the crew a story.

2. Jermaine gave his girlfriend a dozen yellow tulips.

3. That hospital offers nurses better pay.

4. Dad brought Grandma her glasses.

5. Mom bought herself a new car.

Exercise 5

Use what you have learned so far to bring variety in your writing. Use your own sheet of paper to write six sentences that practice each basic sentence pattern. When you have finished, label each part of the sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO).

Exercise 6

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the sentences in the correct order. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. The pizza Jeannine burnt.

2. To the Mexican restaurant we had to go for dinner.

3. Jeannine loved the food.

4. So full were we during the walk home.

5. I will make the pizza next time.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Writing at Work

Using the six basic sentence structures, write one of the following:

1. A work e-mail to a coworker about a presentation.
2. A business letter to a potential employer.
3. A status report about your current project.
4. A job description for your résumé.

Note: See the end-of-chapter exercises for more complicated sentence structure sentence rewrites.

Placement of Adjectives

An adjective is a kind of descriptive word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It tells *which one*, *what kind*, and *how many*. Adjectives make your writing more lively and interesting. Keep in mind that a common error is misplacing the adjectives in a sentence. It is important to know where to place the adjective in a sentence so that readers are not confused.

If you are using more than one adjective to describe a noun, place the adjectives in the following order before the noun and place a comma between the adjectives:

1. **Opinion:** an interesting book, a boring movie, a fun ride
2. **Size:** a large box, a tiny turtle, a tall woman
3. **Shape:** a round ball, a long hose, a square field
4. **Age:** a new day, an old horse, a modern building
5. **Color:** an orange sunset, a green jacket, a red bug
6. **Ethnicity:** Italian cheese, French wine, Chinese tea
7. **Material:** silk shirt, wool socks, a cotton dress:

Example: The intriguing, long movie held my interest even though it lasted almost three hours.

Tip:

Adjectives can also be placed at the end of a sentence if they describe the subject of a sentence and appear after the verb. (This is also called a noun compliment.)

Example: My biology class is interesting.

Exercise 7

On a separate piece of paper, place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun. The first one has been done for you.

1. book: old, small, Spanish

A small, old, Spanish book (age, size, ethnicity/language)

2. photograph: new strange

3. suit: wool, green funny

4. opinion: refreshing, new

5. dress: fashionable, purple

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 8

On a separate piece of paper, place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun.

1. eyes: black, mesmerizing

2. jacket: vintage, orange, suede

3. pineapple: ripe, yellow, sweet

4. vacation: fun, skiing

5. movie: hilarious, independent

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Answers

Exercise 6

Exercise 7

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12.4: Questions and Negative Statements

Figure: Unsplash

Question Form

The question form can be tricky, and even native speakers sometimes forget to include question marks at the end of questions.

Questions include the following four types of words:

- The "question words" of **who**, **what**, **where, when,** and **why** (most of the time). These are also known as the journalist words.
- Auxiliary word: "do," "does," or "did" or another modal
- A subject
- Main verb (sometimes with a complement after it)

Questions always end with a question mark: ?

Tip: Don't forget to write the question mark at the end of a question. Students sometime forget this on paper.

All the questions you may have about grammatically correct questions are probably answered in the following video, which is also really good for those who are still practicing conversation.

YouTube Video

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View this YouTube Video online

Video 12.4.1

Transforming a Sentence

English speakers rely on the following two common ways to turn sentences into questions:

1. Move the helping verb and add a question mark.
2. Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did,* and add a question mark.

Here is an example of moving the helping verb and adding a question mark.

Declarative Sentence: Sierra **can** pack these boxes.

Question (Interrogative form): Can Sierra pack these boxes**?**

Here is an example of adding the verb *do*, *does*, or *did*, and adding a question mark:

Sentence: Jolene skated across the pond.

Question: Did Jolene skate across the pond**?**

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, create questions from the following sentences.

1. *Boyz n the Hood* is a film directed by John Singleton.

2. It won many awards.

3. It was one of the first movies to depict somewhat realistically the effects street life can have on young people.

4. The movie stars Cuba Gooding, Jr., Ice Cube, Lawrence Fishburne, Angela Basset, Regina King, Nia Long, and Morris Chestnut.

5. The movie has stood the test of time.

6. My daughter will have to think about her college options.

7. Otto is waiting in the car for his girlfriend.

8. The article talks about conserving energy.

9. We need to reduce our budget.

10. Rusha is always complaining about her work.

Negative Statements

Negative statements are the opposite of positive statements and are many times necessary to express an opposing idea. The following charts list negative words and helping verbs that can be combined to form a negative statement.

Negative Words		
never	no	hardly
nobody	none	scarcely
no one	not	barely
nowhere		rarely

Common Helping Verbs		
am	is	are
was	were	be
being	been	have
has	had	do
does	did	can
could	may	might
must	will	should
would	ought to	used to

Figure: Unsplash

The following examples show several ways to make a sentence negative in the present tense.

1. A helping verb used with the negative word *not*.

   Sentence: My guests are arriving now.

   Negative: My guests **are not** arriving now.

2. **Sentence:** Jennie has money.

   Negative: Jennie **has no** money.

3. The contraction *n't*. (This is the same as number 1; there is just a contraction rather than the spelled out *not*.)

   Sentence: Janetta does miss her mom.

   Negative: Janetta **doesn't** miss her mom.

4. The negative adverb *rarely*. (Note that "rarely" is an almost opposite, not a complete opposite.)

   Sentence: I always go to the gym after work.

   Negative: I **rarely** go to the gym after work.

5. **Sentence:** Everybody gets the day off.

   Negative: Nobody gets the day off.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.

1. Everybody is happy about the mandatory lunch.
2. Deborah likes to visit online dating sites.
3. Jordan donates blood every six months.
4. Our writing instructor is very effective.
5. That beautiful papaya is cheap.
6. Sometimes I work on Saturdays.
7. The garden attracts butterflies and bees.
8. He breathes loudly at night.
9. I communicate well with my family.

The following sentences show you the ways to make a sentence negative in the past tense.

Sentence: Paul called me yesterday.

Negative: Paul **did not** call me yesterday.

Sentence: Jamilee went to the grocery store.

Negative: Jamilee **never went** to the grocery store.

Sentence: Gina laughed when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Negative: Gina **did not laugh** when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Notice that when forming a negative in the past tense, the helping verb *did* is what signals the past tense, and the main verb *laugh* does not have an *-ed* ending.

Exercise 3

Rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the errors in the past-tense negative sentences.

Celeste no call me when she reached North Carolina. I was worried because she not drove alone before. She was going to meet her friend, Terry, who lived in a town called Asheville, North Carolina. I did never want to worry, but she said she was going to call when she reached there. Finally, four hours later, she called and said, “Mom, I’m sorry I did not call. I lost track of time because I was so happy to see Terry!” I was relieved.

Double Negatives

Double negatives are two negatives used in the same phrase or sentence. They are considered incorrect in Standard English. Think of it like math -- two negatives cancel each other out and make a positive. And this is the opposite of what you mean. You should avoid using double negatives in all formal writing. If you want to say something negative, use only one negative word in the sentence. Return to the beginning of this section for a list of negative words, and then study the following examples.

Double negative	Single negative
neg. + neg. I couldn’t find no paper	neg. I couldn’t find any paper.

neg. + neg. I don’t want nothing.	neg. I don’t want anything.

Tip
Ain't is considered a contraction of *am not*. Although some may use it in everyday speech, it is considered incorrect in standard English. Avoid using it when speaking and writing in formal contexts.

Exercise 4

On your own sheet of paper, correct the double negatives and rewrite the following sentences.

1. Jose didn’t like none of the choices on the menu.
2. Brittany can’t make no friends with nobody.
3. The Southwest hardly had no rain last summer.
4. My kids never get into no trouble.
5. I could not do nothing about the past.Tip

Exercise 5

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the double negatives.

That morning it was so hot Forrest felt like he couldn’t hardly breathe. Ain’t nothing would get him out the door into that scorching heat. Then he remembered his dog, Zeus, who started whining right then. Zeus was whining and barking so much that Forrest didn’t have no choice but to get off the couch and face the day. That dog didn’t do nothing but sniff around the bushes and try to stay in the shade while Forrest was sweating in the sun holding the leash. He couldn’t not wait for winter to come..

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12.5: Word Form

Word Form

Almost every word has a "root" -- a base unit of meaning around which the rest of the word is built. In English, most of the root words come from Greek, Latin, or Anglo Saxon. A word may also have a prefix that adds on to the meaning. For example, "prepare" has the root, "pare," which means "to cut close" or "to give birth to" -- so we can interpret this meaning an act of creation or doing. "Pre" means "before." Both "pre" and "pare" are from Latin. The word "prepare" then means before an act of doing or creation. A suffix is the word ending and indicates the part of speech or function within a sentence. For instance, although the word "prepare" is a verb, adding "ing" to the end turns it into a noun, so the meaning becomes "the act of getting ready." The word can then be used a a subject, an object of a preposition, etc. Thus, "prepare" and "preparing" would appear in two very different places in an English sentence.

Most of the time in English, the part of speech (or verb tense in the case of verbs) is indicated by the suffix (ending) of the word. As you know, word order is very important in English to indicate meanings and relationships. The word form needs to work with the word order to reinforce the meaning through the form. Many English language learners, as well as native speakers, are not sure what ending to put on the word at least some of the time. This page is a review of word form although it is not exhaustive. For more information about verb tense and form, please see Chapter 12.6.

Table 12.5.1 -- Common Suffixes

Common Suffixes			
Nouns	**Adjectives**	**Verbs**	**Adverbs**
--er / --or / --ar (means "the person who does") (Turns a verb into a noun) **paint to painter**	--less (means "without") (Turns a noun into an adjective) **clue to clueless**	--ate (means "to make, have, become") **obviate**	--ly (means "how something is done") (Turns a verb into an adverb) **slow to slowly**
--ist (means "the person who is") (Noun) **theorist**	--ful (means "full of") (Turns a noun or verb into an adjective) **mourn to mournful**	--ify (means "to make, have, become") (Turns an adjective into a verb) **beauty to beautify**	--wise (means "in relation to") (Turns different kinds of words into an adverb) **other to otherwise**
--ion (means "the act of doing something) (Turns a verb into a noun) **act to action**	--able (means "can") (Turns a verb into an adjective) **work to workable**	--ize (means "to make, have, become") (Turns a noun into a verb) **sympathy to sympathize**	

--ence* (means "the act of doing something") (Turns an adjective into a noun) **violent to violence**	--y* (means "full of, covered with") (Turns a noun into an adjective) **sneeze to sneezy**		
--ment (means "the act of doing something; product or result of an action") (Turns a verb into a noun) **encourage to encouragement**	--ous (means "fll of, covered with) **harmony to harmonious**		
--ness (means "the state of being something") (Turns an adjective into a noun.) **kind to kindness**	--al (means "connected with") (Turns a noun into an adjective) **emotion to emotional**		
--ship (the state) **friendship**	--ish (means "like, similar to") (Turns a noun into an adjective) **child to childish**		
--ity (means "the state of being something") (Turns an adjective into a noun.) **clear to clarity**	--ic (means "like, similar to") (Turns a noun into an adjective) **athlete to athletic**		
	--ive (means "has qualities of") (Turns a verb into an adjective) **create to creative**		

* Sometime the spelling of a word ending may need to change to add on the suffix correctly. A commonly known spelling rule in this area is to change "y" to "i' before adding the ending. For example, change the "y" in "activit**y"** to "i" when pluralizing it to "activit**i**es." Nouns that end in "t" should be "c" when adding endings; for example, the "t" in "violen**t**" becomes "c" in "violen**c**e."

When a word ends in a silent "e" and you need to add an ending that begins with a vowel, drop the "e" and add the ending.

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Video 12.5.1

Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words that bring your writing to life. Using the appropriate word form in your writing shows you understand how word variety and use is important. This also helps your writing be clear to the reader. The English language contains an enormous and ever-growing number of words. Enhancing your vocabulary by learning new words can seem overwhelming, but if you know the common prefixes and suffixes of English, you will understand many more words. Mastering common prefixes and suffixes is like learning a code. Once you crack the code, you can not only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words, especially if you are familiar with common Greek and Latin roots.

Exercise 1

Change the bolded words in the following sentences so that they are right word form for the grammatical function in the sentence.

1. **Violent** is not the answer; talking is.
2. Macbeth was not a **virtue** character.
3. The **idealism** decided to work in the nonprofit sector.
4. Some dictators want to have world **dominate.**
5. **Create** is necessary for many careers, even in the sciences.
6. Madison warns against **factional** in The Federalist Papers.
7. I finished that test very **easy**.

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12.6: Verbs and Verb Tense

Suppose you must give an oral presentation about what you did last summer. How do you make it clear that you are talking about the past and not about the present or the future? Using the correct verb tense can help you do this. Verbs indicate actions or states of being in the past, present, or future using tenses.

It is important to use the proper verb tense. Otherwise, your listener might not understand the time frame you are talking or writing about. In addition, mistakes in tense often leave a listener or reader with a negative impression, especially in a formal or work context.

One way to categorize verbs is whether they follow certain rules or not: regular verbs (verbs that follow tense rules consistently with regard to spelling) and irregular verbs (verbs that don't follow those rules). Unfortunately, in English, some of the most common verbs are also irregular.

Regular Verbs

Simple Tenses

Regular verbs follow the same patterns when shifting from the present to past tense or future tense. For example, to form a past-tense or past-participle verb form, add *-ed* or *-d* to the end of a verb. You can avoid mistakes by understanding this basic pattern.

Verb tense identifies the time of action described in a sentence. Verbs take different forms to indicate different tenses. Verb tenses indicate:

- an action or state of being in the present,
- an action or state of being in the past,
- an action or state of being in the future.

Helping verbs, such as *be* and *have,* also work to create verb tenses, such as the future tense.

Present Tense: Tim *walks* to the store. (Singular subject)
Present Tense: Sue and Kimmy *walk* to the store. (Plural subject)
Past Tense: Yesterday, they *walked* to the store to buy some bread. (Singular subject)

Future Tense: I *will walk* to the store tomorrow. (Singular subject)

When *he*, *she*, or *it* doing the present tense action, remember to add *–s*, or *–es* to the end of the verb or to change the *y* to *–ies*.

When *he*, *she*, or *it* is doing the action in the past tense, remember to add *–d* or *–ed* to the end of regular verbs.

Simple future verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:

- I **will work** late tomorrow.
- I **will kiss** my boyfriend when I see him.
- I **will erase** the board after class.

For the most part, we focus on the simple past, present, and future tenses here. However, a list of all the tense can be found in the chart below. Notice that the examples all use regular verbs, and -- depending on the tense -- helping verbs as well.

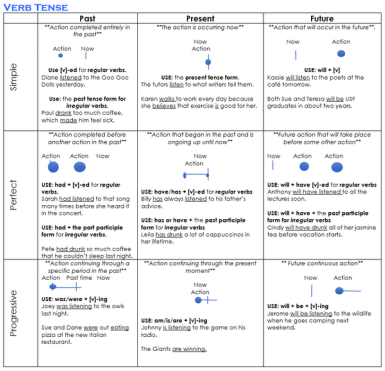

Figure: by Erika Dyquisto.

Exercises

Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tenses.

1. The Dust Bowl (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of very destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s.
2. Historians today (consider, considered, will consider) The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather of events in American history.
3. The Dust Bowl mostly (affects, affected, will affect) the states of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.
4. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.
5. The dust storms during The Dust Bowl (cause, caused, will cause) irreparable damage to farms and the environment for a period of several years.
6. When early settlers (move, moved, will move) into this area, they (remove, removed, will remove) the natural prairie grasses in order to plant crops and graze their cattle.
7. They did not (realize, realized, will realize) that the grasses kept the soil in place.
8. There (is, was, will be) also a severe drought that (affects, affected, will affect) the region.
9. The worst dust storm (happens, happened, will happen) on April 14, 1935, a day called Black Sunday.
10. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains (arrive, arrived, will arrive).
11. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to affect the region, but hopefully they will not be as destructive as the storms of the 1930s.

Exercise 2

The infinitive (tenseless) form of the verb is included before each sentence. Rewrite each sentence with the correct tense of the verb that makes sense within the context of the sentence.

1. (to travel) Tomorrow, I _____ to visit my family.

2. (to work) I _____ hard every day.

3. (to run) I _____ all the way to the bus this morning so I could get to class on time.

4. (to request) Your presence is _____ at the party on May 3, 2020.

5. (to carry) They _____ their luggage up the hill to the vacation house they rented.

6. (to marry) Tom and John _____ on June 6, 2020.

Tip

When describing what happens in something you've read (on the computer or paper) or watched (in a video), use the simple present tense to describe that action. This is an academic convention. For example, you might write: Chewbacca *acts* as Han Solo's assistant and character commentator in *Star Wars*.

Progressive Tenses

YouTube Video

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Video 12.6.1

Present Progressive Tense

Progressive verb tenses describe a continuing or unfinished action, such as *I am going, I was going*, or *I will be going*.

The present progressive tense describes an action or state of being that takes place in the present and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the present progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Present tense form of *to be*	**+**	*-ing* **(present participle)**
am/is/are	help	helping

You should use the present progressive tense to describe a planned activity, to describe an activity that is recurring right now, and to describe an activity that is in progress although not actually occurring at the time of speaking:

- Preeti **is starting** school on Tuesday.

This sentence describes a planned activity.

- Janetta **is getting** her teeth cleaned right now.

This sentence describes an activity that is occurring right now.

- I **am studying** ballet at school.

This sentence describes an activity that is in progress but not actually occurring at the time of speaking.

Past Progressive Tense

The past progressive tense describes an action or state of being that took place in the past and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the past progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Past tense form of *to be*	**+**	**-ing (present participle)**
was/were		helping

You should use the past progressive tense to describe a continuous action in the past, to describe a past activity in progress while another activity occurred, or to describe two past activities in progress at the same time:

- Ella and I **were planning** a vacation.

This sentence describes a continuous action in the past.

- I **was helping** a customer when I smelled delicious fried chicken.

This sentence describes a past activity in progress while another activity occurred.

- While I **was finishing** my homework, my wife **was talking** on the phone.

This sentence describes two past activities in progress at the same time.

Future Progressive Tense

The future progressive tense describes an action or state of being that will take place in the future and that will continue to take place. The action will have started at that future moment, but it will not have finished at that moment.

To make verbs in the future progressive tense, combine these parts:

Future tense form of *to be*	**+**	**-ing (present participle)**
will be		helping

Use the future progressive tense to describe an activity that will be in progress in the future:

- Samantha and I **will be dancing** in the school play next week.
- Tomorrow Agnes **will be reading** two of her poems.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, revise the following sentences, written in simple tenses, using the progressive tenses indicated in parentheses.

1. He prepared the food while I watched. (past progressive tense)

2. Jonathan will speak at the conference. (future progressive)

3. Josie traveled to Egypt last July. (past progressive tense)

4. My foot aches, so I know it will rain. (present progressive tense)

5. Micah will talk a lot when I see him. (future progressive)

6. I yawn a lot because I feel tired. (present progressive tense)

Figure:

Tip

Many people casually speak in the present progressive tense when they really should use the simple present tense. Watch out for this in your writing!

Perfect Tenses

The three perfect tenses indicate that an action is complete. They are present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. These are the three basic tenses of English. A past participle is used in the perfect tenses. Past participles are often called the *–ed* form of a verb because they are formed by adding *–d* or *–ed* to the base form of regular verbs. Past participles can also end in *-t* or *-en* (irregular verbs, see below). Keep in mind, however, the past participle is also formed in various other ways for irregular verbs. The past participle can be used to form the present perfect tense.

Present Perfect Tense

Review the following basic formula for the present perfect tense:

Subject	**+**	**has or have**	**+**	**past participle**

I		have		helped

Use the present perfect tense to describe a continuing situation and to describe an action that has just happened.

- I have worked as a caretaker since June.

This sentence tells us that the subject has worked as a caretaker in the past and is still working as a caretaker in the present.

• Dmitri has just received an award from the Dean of Students. This sentence tells us that Dmitri has very recently received the award.

The word just emphasizes that the action happened very recently.

Past Perfect Tense

Review the following basic formula for the past perfect tense:

Subject	**+**	**have or had**	**+**	**past participle**
I		had		listened

Use the past perfect tense to describe a continuing situation that was completed by a certain time in the past.

- The bus had left by the time Theo arrived at the station.

Notice that both actions occurred entirely in the past, but one action occurred before the other. At some time in the past, Theo arrived (simple past tense) at the station, but at some time before that, the bus had left (past perfect).

Future Perfect Tense

See the following basic formula for the future perfect tense:

Subject	**+**	**will have**	**+**	**past participle**
I		will have		graduated

The future perfect tense describes an action from the past in the future, as if the past event has already occurred. Use the future perfect tense when you anticipate completing an event in the future, but you have not completed it yet.

- You **will have forgotten** me after you **move** to London.

Notice that both actions occur in the future, but one action will occur before the other. At some time in the future, the subject (*you*) *will move* (future tense) to London, and at some time after that, the subject *will have forgotten* (future perfect tense) the speaker, *me*.

Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by using the correct perfect verb tense for the verb in parentheses.

1. I plan to start a compost bin because I _____ (to want) one for a long time now.

2. My brother told me he _____ (to argue) with his friend about politics.

3. By the time we reach the mountain top the sun _____ (to set).

4. Denise _____ (to walk) several miles in the past three hours.

5. His mother _____ (to offer) to pay him to work in her office.

Perfect Progressive Tenses

Present Perfect Progressive

Similar to the present perfect tense, the present perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continues into the present. However, the present perfect progressive is used when you want to stress that the action is ongoing.

To make verbs in the present perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Present tense form of *to have*	**+**	**been**	**+**	**--ing (present participle)**
has or have		been		helping

- He has been talking for the past hour.

This sentence indicates that he started talking in the past and is continuing to talk in the present.

• I have been feeling tired lately.

This sentence indicates that I started feeling tired in the past, and I continue to feel tired in the present. Instead of indicating time, as in the first sentence, the second sentence uses the adverb lately. You can also use the adverb recently when using the present perfect progressive tense.

Past Perfect Progressive

Similar to the past perfect tense, the past perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continued until another time in the past. The past perfect progressive does not continue into the present but stops at a designated moment in the past.

To make verbs in the past perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Past tense form of *to have*	**+**	**been**	**+**	**--ing (present participle)**
had		been		helping

- The employees had been talking until their boss arrived.

This sentence indicates that the employees were talking in the past and they stopped talking when their boss arrived, which also happened in the past.

- I had been working all day.

This sentence implies that I was working in the past. The action does not continue into the future, and the sentence implies that the subject stopped working for unstated reasons.

Future Perfect Progressive

The future perfect progressive tense is rarely used. It is used to indicate an action that will begin in the future and will continue until another time in the future.

To make verbs in the future perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Future tense form of *to have*	**+**	**been**	**+**	**--ing (present participle)**
will have		been		helping

- By the end of the meeting, I will have been hearing about mortgages and taxes for eight hours.

This sentence indicates that in the future I will hear about mortgages and taxes for eight hours, but it has not happened yet. It also indicates the action of hearing will continue until the end of the meeting, something that is also in the future.

Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs do not use the same rules to create past tense.Here are some examples.

Present Tense: Lauren *keeps* all her letters.
Past Tense: Lauren *kept* all her letters.
Future Tense: Lauren *will keep* all her letters.

The videos below will give you some general ideas of how to identify and memorize irregular verbs.

YouTube Video

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Video 12.6.1

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Video 12.6.1

Some of the most common irregular verbs are also the most common verbs in English: "to be," "to do," and "to have."

To Be, To Do, and To Have

The following table shows the past, present and future forms of these common irregular verbs.

Base Form	**Past Tense Form**	**Present Tense Form**	**Future Tense Form**
be	was/were	am/is/are	will be
do	did	do/does	will do

have	had	have/has	will have

Memorize the present tense forms of to be, to do, and to have. A song or rhythmic pattern will make them easier to memorize.

Review these examples of to be, to do, and to have used in sentences.

Past	Present	Future
To Be		
Yesterday I **was** angry.	Today I **am** angry.	Tomorrow I **will be** angry.
To Do		
I **did** my best yesterday.	I **do** my best today.	I **will do** my best tomorrow.
To Have		
Yesterday I **had** ten dollars.	Today I **have** ten dollars.	Tomorrow I **will have** ten dollars.

Remember the following uses of to be, to have and to do:

To Be

- I → am/was/will be
- you/we/they → are/were/will be
- he/she/it → is/was/will be

To Have

- I/you/we/they → have/had/will have
- he/she/it → has/had/will have

To Do

- I/you/we/they → do/did/will do
- he/she/it → does/did/will do

Exercise 5

*On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct form of the verbs **to be, to have,** and **to do** in the three simple tenses.*

1. Stefan always (do, does, will do) his taxes the day before they are due.
2. We (are, is, was) planning a surprise birthday party for my mother.
3. Turtles (have, had, has) the most beautiful patterns on their shells.
4. I always (do, did, will do) my homework before dinner, so I can eat in peace.
5. You (is, are, was) so much smarter than you think!

Study the table below, “Irregular Verbs”, which lists the most common irregular verbs.

Table 12.6: Irregular Verbs

Irregular Verbs			
Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
be	was, were	lose	lost
become	became	make	made
begin	began	mean	meant
blow	blew	meet	met
break	broke	pay	paid
bring	brought	put	put
build	built	quit	quit
burst	burst	read	read
buy	bought	ride	rode
catch	caught	ring	rang
choose	chose	rise	rose
come	came	run	ran
cut	cut	say	said
dive	dove (dived)	see	saw
do	did	seek	sought
draw	drew	sell	sold
drink	drank	send	sent
drive	drove	set	set
eat	ate	shake	shook
fall	fell	shine	shone (shined)
feed	fed	shrink	shrank (shrunk)
feel	felt	sing	sang
fight	fought	sit	sat
find	found	sleep	slept
fly	flew	speak	spoke
forget	forgot	spend	spent
forgive	forgave	spring	sprang
freeze	froze	stand	stood
get	got	steal	stole
give	gave	strike	struck
go	went	swim	swam
grow	grew	swing	swung
have	had	take	took
hear	heard	teach	taught
hide	hid	tear	tore
hold	held	tell	told

Irregular Verbs			
Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
hurt	hurt	think	thought
keep	kept	throw	threw
know	knew	understand	understood
lay	laid	wake	woke
lead	led	wear	wore
leave	left	win	won
let	let	wind	wound

Tip

The best way to learn irregular verbs is to memorize them. With the help of a classmate, create flashcards of irregular verbs and test yourselves until you master them.

Exercise 6

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the irregular verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tense. Copy the corrected sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Marina finally (forgived, forgave, will forgive) her sister for snooping around her room.
2. The house (shook, shaked, shakes) as the airplane rumbled overhead.
3. I (buyed, bought, buy) several items of clothing at the thrift store on Wednesday.
4. She (put, putted, puts) the lotion in her shopping basket and proceeded to the checkout line.
5. The prized goose (layed, laid, lay) several golden eggs last night.
6. Mr. Batista (teached, taught, taughted) the class how to use correct punctuation.
7. I (drink, drank, will drink) several glasses of sparkling cider instead of champagne on New Year's Eve next year.
8. Although Hector (growed, grew, grows) three inches in one year, we still called him "Little Hector."
9. Yesterday our tour guide (lead, led, will lead) us through the maze of people in Times Square.
10. The rock band (burst, bursted, bursts) onto the music scene with their catchy songs.

Exercise 7

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence using the correct form of the verb tense shown below.

1. Throw (past)
2. Paint (simple present)
3. Smile (future)
4. Tell (past)
5. Share (simple present)Maintaining Consistent Verb Tense

Verb Tense Consistency

Consistent verb tense means the same verb tense is used throughout a sentence or a paragraph. As you write and revise, it is important to use the same verb tense consistently and to avoid shifting from one tense to another unless there is a good reason for the tense shift. In the following box, see whether you notice the difference between a sentence with consistent tense and one with inconsistent tense.

Inconsistent tense:

The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.
Consistent tense:
The crowd *started* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.
Consistent tense:
The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approaches* the finish line.

Tip:

In some cases, clear communication will call for different tenses. Look at the following example:

When I was a teenager, I *wanted* to be a fire fighter, but now I *am studying* computer science.

If the time frame for each action or state of being is different, a tense shift is appropriate.

Exercise 8

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the inconsistent verb tense. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

In the Middle Ages, most people lived in villages and work as agricultural laborers, or peasants. Every village has a "lord," and the peasants worked on his land. Much of what they produce go to the lord and his family. What little food was leftover goes to support the peasants' families. In return for their labor, the lord offers them protection. A peasant's day usually began before sunrise and involves long hours of backbreaking work, which includes plowing the land, planting seeds, and cutting crops for harvesting. The working life of a peasant in the Middle Ages is usually demanding and exhausting.

Writing at Work

Read the following excerpt from a work e-mail:

> I would like to highlight an important concern that comes up after our meeting last week. During the meeting, we agree to conduct a series of interviews over the next several months in which we hired new customer service representatives. Before we do that, however, I would like to review your experieces with the Customer Relationship Managment Program. Please suggest a convenient time next week for us to meet so that we can discuss this important matter.

The inconsistent tense in the e-mail will very likely distract the reader from its overall point. Most likely, your coworkers will not correct your verb tenses or call attention to grammatical errors, but it is important to keep in mind that errors such as these do have a subtle negative impact in the workplace.

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12.7: Modal Auxiliaries

We all need to express our moods and emotions, both in writing and in our everyday life. We do this by using modal auxiliaries to verbs.

Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are a type of helping verb that is used only with a main verb to help express the verb's mood.

The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

Subject	+	modal auxiliary	+	main verb
James		may		call

There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English, which are shown in Table 12.7.

Table 12.7 -- Modal Auxiliaries

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
can	Expresses an ability or possibility	I **can lift** this forty-pound box. (ability)
		We **can embrace** green sources of energy. (possibility)
could	Expresses an ability in the past; a present possibility; a past or future permission	I **could beat** you at chess when we were kids. (past ability)
		We **could bake** a pie! (present possibility)
		Could we **pick** some flowers from the garden? (future permission)
may	Expresses uncertain future action; permission; ask a yes-no question	I **may attend** the concert. (uncertain future action)
		You **may begin** the exam. (permission)
		May I **attend** the concert? (yes-no questions)
might	Expresses uncertain future action	I **might attend** the concert (uncertain future action—same as *may*)
shall	Expresses intended future action	I **shall** go to the opera. (intended future action)
should	Expresses obligation; ask if an obligation exists	I **should mail** my RSVP. (obligation, same as *ought to*)
		Should I **call** my mother? (asking if an obligation exists)
will	Expresses intended future action; ask a favor; ask for information	I **will get** an A in this class. (intended future action)
		Will you **buy** me some chocolate? (favor)
		Will you **be finished** soon? (information)
would	States a preference; request a choice politely; explain an action; introduce habitual past actions	I **would like** the steak, please. (preference)
		Would you **like** to have breakfast in bed? (request a choice politely)

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
		I **would go** with you if I didn't have to babysit tonight. (explain an action)
		He **would write** to me every week when we were dating. (habitual past action)
must	Expresses obligation	We **must be** on time for class.
ought to	Expresses obligation	I **ought to mail** my RSVP. (obligation, same as may)

Use the following format to form a yes-no (closed) question with a modal auxiliary:

Modal auxiliary	+	subject	+	main verb
Should		I		drive?

Be aware of these four common errors when using modal auxiliaries:

1. Using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal

   Incorrect: I can to move this heavy table.

   Correct: I **can move** this heavy table.

2. Using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal

   Incorrect: I could moving to the United States.

   Correct: I **could move** to the United States.

3. Using two modals in a row

   Incorrect: I should must *renew* my passport.

   Correct: I **must renew** my passport.

   Correct: I **should renew** my passport.

4. Leaving out a modal

   Incorrect: I renew my passport.

   Correct: I **must renew** my passport.

Exercise 1

Edit the following short paragraph by correcting the common modal auxiliary errors.

I may to go to France on vacation next summer. I shall might visit the Palace of Versailles. I would to drive around the countryside. I could imagining myself living there; however, I will not move to France because my family should miss me very much.

Modals and Present Perfect Verbs

In the previous section, we defined present perfect verb tense as describing a continuing situation or something that has just happened.

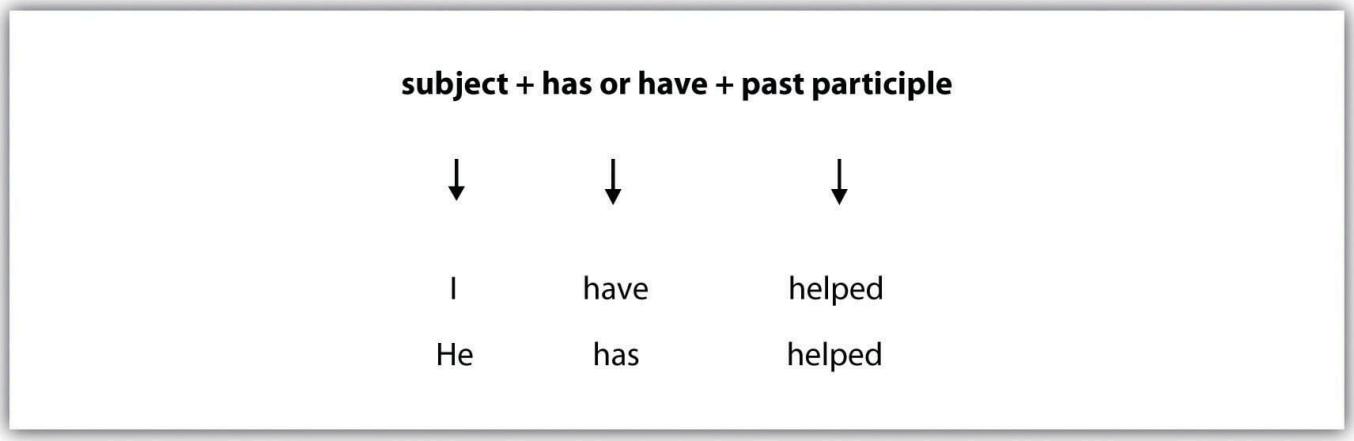

Figure: .

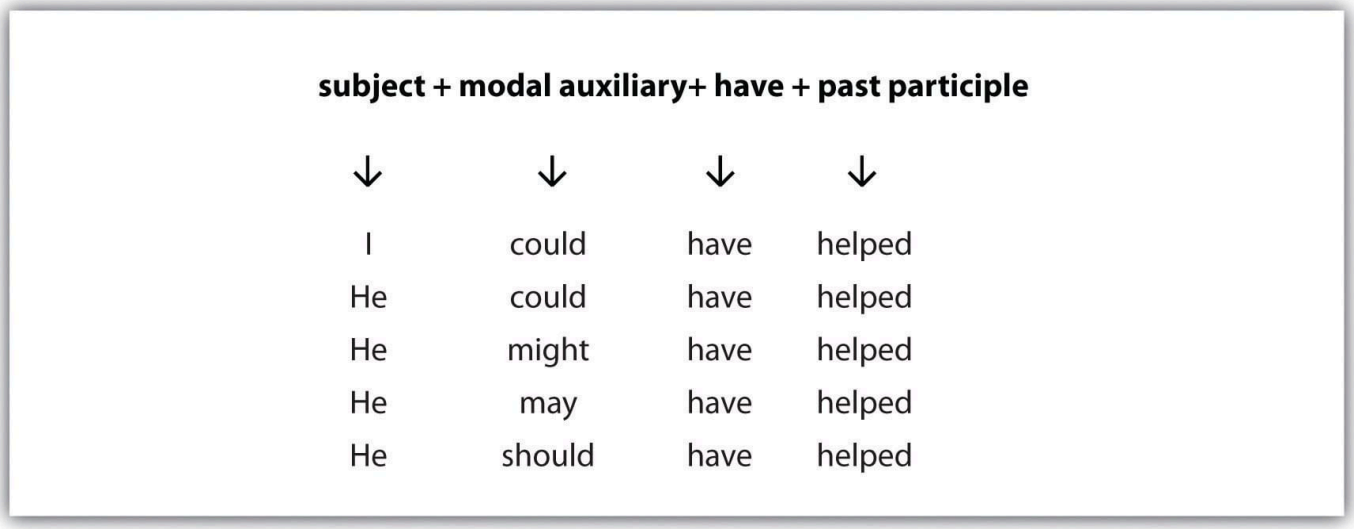

Figure: Be aware of the following common errors when using modal auxiliaries in the present perfect tense:

1. **Incorrect:** Jamie would had attended the party, but he was sick.

   Correct: Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

2. **Incorrect:** Jamie would attended the party, but he was sick.

   Correct: Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by changing the given verb form to a modal auxiliary in present perfect tense.

1. The man _____ (laugh).

2. The frogs _____ (croak).
3. My writing teacher _____ (smile).
4. The audience _____ (cheer) all night.
5. My best friend _____ (giggled).

If you would like a more in-depth view of modal verbs, watch the following video:

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Video 12.7.1

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12.8: Other Verb-Like Words and Their Functions

Verbs, as you know, carry tense and indicate time and mood. However, some forms of verb-like words don't carry tense and perform other functions in a sentence, such as acting as a subject or object, or acting as a descriptor. To understand this, you need to understand the basic, tense-less form of a verb, called an "infinitive." This term comes from the word "infinity," which implies outside of time.

Infinitives

An infinitive is a form of a verb that comes after the word *to* and acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

to + verb = infinitive

Examples of infinitives include to move, to sleep, to look, to throw, to read, and to sneeze.

Often main verbs are followed by infinitives. Study the following table for examples. The infinitive follows the main verb because the main verb itself is what carries the tense.

Table 12.8.1 -- Infinitives and Verbs

	Infinitive
to help	Jessica **offered to help** her move.
to arrive	Mick **expects to arrive** early.
to win	Sunita **wants to win** the writing contest.
to close	He **forgot to close** the curtains.
to eat	She **likes to eat** late.

Tip

Never use a verb-like word with a suffix ("ing" or "ed") with "to" before it. This is mixing forms.

Gerunds

A gerund is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in *-ing*. Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition.

You can use a gerund in the following ways:

1. **Traveling** is Cynthia's favorite pastime.
2. I enjoy **jogging**.
3. The librarian scolded me for **laughing**.

Often verbs are followed by gerunds. Study the following table for examples.

Table 12.8.2 -- Gerunds and Verbs

Gerund	Verb Followed by a Gerund
moving	Denise **considered moving** to Paris.
cleaning	I **hate cleaning** the bathroom.

Gerund	Verb Followed by a Gerund
winning	Nate **imagines winning** an Oscar one day.
worrying	Mom says she **has stopped worrying**.
taking	She **admitted taking** the pumpkin.

You may wonder which verbs can be followed by gerunds and which verbs can be followed by infinitives. With the following verbs, you can use either a gerund or an infinitive.

Table 12.8.3 -- Verbs that Take Infinitives or Gerunds

Base Form of Verb	Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds *and* Infinitives
begin	1. John **began crying**.
	2. John **began to cry**.
hate	1. Marie **hated talking** on the phone.
	2. Marie **hated to talk** on the phone.
forget	1. Wendell **forgot paying** the bills.
	2. Wendell **forgot to pay** the bills.
like	1. I **liked leaving** messages.
	2. I **liked to leave** messages.
continue	1. He **continued listening** to the news.
	2. He **continued to listen** to the news.
start	1. I **will start recycling** immediately.
	2. I **will start to recycle** immediately.
try	1. Mikhail **will try climbing** the tree.
	2. Mikhail **will try to climb** the tree.
prefer	1. I **prefer baking**.
	2. I **prefer to bake**.
love	1. Josh **loves diving**.
	2. Josh **loves to dive**.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by choosing the correct infinitive or gerund.

1. I meant _____ (to kiss, kissing) my kids before they left for school.
2. The children hoped (to go, going) to a restaurant for dinner.
3. Do you intend _____ (to eat, eating) the entire pie?
4. Crystal postponed _____ (to get dressed, getting dressed) for the party.
5. When we finish _____ (to play, playing) this game, we will go home.

Past Participles

Past participles do many things, one of which can be to begin a descriptive, modifying phrase called a verbal phrase.

A past participle, as you may remember from earlier in this chapter, is a verb with an "ed" on the end, but in this case the word

act as a descriptor (adjective or adverb) rather than a main verb that carries tense. Here are some examples:

Scared to sleep through her alarm, Megan asked her mom to wake her at 6 a.m.

To see how "scared" does not carry tense in this case, we can break up this sentence into two main ideas:

- She was **scared** to sleep through her alarm. (Scared is an adjective complement to the main verb, *was*. It just describes how she felt. Therefore, "scared" does not carry tense here.
- Megan asked her mom to wake her at 6 a.m. (The main verb is "asked," which carries the past tense.)

Notice:

When using a verbal phrase as a modifier, only a past participle or gerund is used. No additional verb is included in the modifying phrase.

Exercise 2

On a separate piece of paper, combine and rewrite the following sentence sets by changing one of the sentences in each set to a verbal (modifying) phrase and adding that on to the main clause. You may need to change a main verb into a verbal ending in --ed or --ing to do so.

1. She felt antsy. She went for a run.

2. He knew that he did well on the final. Kendrick relaxed about his grade.

3. They felt frustrated that the weather wasn't cooperating with their plans. They decided to go to the movies instead.

4. Donia was excited to open her presents. She couldn't wait for her birthday to arrive.

5. Andrew finally was able to buy the car he wanted. He made the tires screech as he pulled out from the auto dealer.

Answer available at the end of this section.

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Answers

Exercise 2

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12.9: Count-Noncount (Collective) Nouns

Nouns represent persons, places, things, and ideas. Nouns that name something in general, such as a *bridge*, are **common nouns**. Nouns that name specific things with titles, such as *The Golden Gate Bridge*, are called **proper nouns.** Proper nouns are always capitalized whereas common nouns follow regular capitalization rules (see "Capitalization"). Proper nouns are always one specific thing, so they are neither countable or noncount (collective). Common nouns, however, can either be **countable** (they can be pluralized, such as *bridge*) or **noncountable** (also known as collective) Noncount nouns are those that are always referred to as a whole, or collectively, such as *equipment*. *Equipment* could refer to one piece of equipment or many pieces of equipment, but it's just referred to as *equipment* and is never pluralized (--s or --es is never added to the end to indicate more than one).

Incorrect: five moneys, two furnitures, three sugars

Correct: some money, two pieces of furniture, two teaspoons of sugar

Many other grammatical rules and structures depend on whether a noun is singular, plural, or noncount (collective), so it's important to have a good working understanding of this topic.

Count Nouns

A count noun refers to people, places, and things that are separate units. You make count nouns plural by adding *-s* or *--es* to the end of the word. Count nouns almost always take an article before them (or before the adjective that precedes the noun). See "Articles" on page 12.10. Only if you are writing or talking about something in general does a count noun not take an article before it.

Examples:

- I needed to purchase **the books** for my biology class before **the first day**.
- **A choice** was given to me: Pass the last essay or retake **the class** next semester.
- *College* is important to consider when thinking about one's future.

Noncount Nouns

A noncount noun identifies a whole object that cannot separate and count individually. Noncount nouns may refer to concrete objects or abstract things or ideas. A concrete noun identifies an object you can see, taste, touch, or count. An abstract noun identifies an idea or concept that you cannot see, touch, or count. There are some exceptions, but most abstract nouns cannot be made plural, so they are noncount nouns. Examples of abstract nouns include anger, education, melancholy, research, softness, violence, and conduct.

Types of Noncount Nouns

The following table categorizes noncount nouns by type.

Type of Noncount Noun	Examples	Sentences
Foods	sugar, salt, lettuce, pepper, rice, coffee, tea	Add more sugar to my coffee please.
Solids	concrete, chocolate, silver, soap, equipment	The ice cream was covered in warm chocolate.
Abstract Nouns	peace, warmth, hospitality, love, information, violence, tranquility	The tranquility of the beach was relaxing.

Tip

Many abstract concepts end in “ness,” “tion,” “ance,” or “ence.”

Some other common noncount nouns you will likely encounter in college or business:

analysis business change composition consumption cost demand dependence electricity energy enough industry inflation information

investment jargon likelihood management mitigation money oil output potential probability production property prosperity research

risk time uncertainty reliance scope sequence supply tradework

Note

Sometimes nouns can be used as adjectives to describe another noun (example: investment products – “investment” describes the type of products). When a noun is acting as an adjective, never put an “s” on the end of it.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, identify whether the italicized noun in the sentence is a count or noncount noun by writing C or NC above the noun.

1. The amount of *traffic* on the way home was terrible.
2. *Forgiveness* is an important part of growing up.
3. I made caramel sauce for the organic *apples* I bought.
4. I prefer film *cameras* instead of digital ones.
5. My favorite subject is *history*.
6. “*Freedom* is just another word for nothing left to lose.”

Exercise 2

On a separate piece of paper, edit the following paragraph for any mistakes with count and noncount noun usage.

Research can be challenging. It takes a long times. First you have to create brainstorm list or mind maps to figure out what you know about the topic and how it relates to other issue. I chose the topic of violent and how it affects our life. After you think of a central question, you then have to read all the researches about the various topics. Then you have decide what is important in what you read and decide what you have to say about that subtopic. Then you have to organize everythings, decide about what you will quote and what paraphrase you will use. Finally, all of the citations has to be correct.

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12.10: Articles

If English is not your first language and depending on your first language, articles can be one of the last grammar items in English that begin to come "naturally." This is because many languages don't have articles as noun markers.

There are two different types of articles, definite and indefinite.

The word ***the*** is a definite article. It refers to one or more specific things. For example, **the** woman refers to not any woman but a particular woman. The definite article ***the*** is used before singular and plural count nouns.

The words ***a*** and ***an*** are indefinite articles. They refer to one nonspecific thing. For example, a woman refers to any woman, not a specific, particular woman. The indefinite article ***a*** or ***an*** is used before a singular count noun only.

Definite Articles (The) and Indefinite Articles (A/An)

- I saw **the** concert. (singular, refers to a specific concert)
- I saw **the** concerts. (plural, refers to more than one specific concert)
- I saw **the** U2 concert last night. (singular, refers to a specific concert)
- I saw **a** concert. (singular, refers to any nonspecific concert)
- **The** research conducted recently shows an increase in global average temperatures. (noncount/collective, refers to specific research)

Three Article Rules – Reminders

The following rules will help to determine when and what kind of article needs to be used.

Rule 1: A singular count noun needs an article or a determiner (see "Count/Noncount Nouns"). Choose **a** or **an** if the noun is indefinite. Choose **the** if the noun is definite

Rule 2: A plural or non-count noun does not take an article unless the plural or non-count noun is definite.

Rule 3: For indefinite articles, use "a" before nouns that begin with consonant sounds but "an" before nouns that begin with vowel sounds.

Tip:

Say the noun aloud to determine whether it should take "**a**" or "**an**." Some words, such as eucalyptus, begin with a letter that is a vowel, but the first sound you make is actually a consonant sound (y with a schwa). This rarely, if ever, happens with a word that begins with a consonant.

Figure: Unsplash

It is common to hear people say or write "an historical." This is incorrect in American English because we pronounce the hard "h" sound when we say historical. So in the U.S., "**a**" should be used before historical. In places where the "h" is silent so the first sound is a short "i," "**an**" should be used. This video explains it further.

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

Video 12.10.1

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, write the correct article in the blank for each of the following sentences. Write OK if the sentence is correct.

1. (A/An/The) camel can live for days without water. _____

2. I enjoyed (a/an/the) pastries at the Bar Mitzvah. _____

3. (A/An/The) politician spoke of many important issues. _____

4. I really enjoyed (a/an/the) actor's performance in the play. _____

5. (A/An/The) goal I have is to run a marathon this year. _____

Exercise 2

Correct the misused or missing articles and rewrite the paragraph.

Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. The stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than sun. Did you know that a Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in an entire universe! Just like a human being, the star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. The star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in the nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of the star-forming nebulas are astonishing.

Articles in Proper Nouns

Sometimes articles can be confusing when they are used as part of a Proper Noun. Why would an article (especially the definite article, **the**), be used when the title of a proper noun already indicates a specific one. The answer to this is complicated. Many times, when what would normally be a common noun is the last word in a proper noun, "the" is used as part of the proper noun. Here are some examples:

- the Empire State Building
- the Chrysler Building
- the Eiffel Tower
- the Golden Gate Bridge
- the United States (or the U.S.)

Table 12.10 -- Categories of Proper Nouns that Take "the"

Category	Example
Government bodies	the Congress, the Senate
Historical periods	the Restoration, the Pleistocene era
Religious texts	the Talmud, the Quran, the Bible
Landmarks	the Eiffel Tower, the Grand Canyon
Large bodies of water	the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea
Points on the globe	the Equator, the South Pole
Deserts, forests, gulfs, peninsulas, and mountain rangers	the Sierra Nevadas, the Gobi Desert

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12.11: Pronouns

Pronouns

Pronouns represent nouns, and there are eight types of pronouns: personal, demonstrative, interrogative, indefinite, possessive, reciprocal, relative, and reflexive. That's a lot to remember. The following table gives some examples of each type, as well as the pronoun functions as a subject, object, or both (some pronouns can only be used as a subject or an object).

Table 12.11.1 -- Pronoun Types

Pronoun Type	Subject	Object
Personal pronouns	he, she, they	him, her, them
Demonstrative pronouns	this, these	them
Interrogative pronouns	who, which	
Indefinite pronouns	none, several, some	
Possessive pronouns	his, your, whose	
Reciprocal pronouns		each other, one another
Relative pronouns	which, where, that, who, whose,	whom
Reflexive pronouns		itself, himself, yourself

A pronoun is a word that can be used in place of the noun. We use pronouns so we do not have to repeat words. For example, imagine writing the following sentence: Afrah put her scarf on because Afrah was cold. The sentence sounds a bit strange because Afrah is named twice; however, if you use a pronoun, the sentence will be shorter and less repetitive. You might rewrite the sentence to something similar to the following: Afrah put her scarf on because she was cold. She refers to Afrah, so you do not have to write the name twice.

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like *Bob said that Bob was tired* or *Christina told the class that Christina received an A*. Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the antecedent of the pronoun.

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.

- *She* refers to *Lani*.
- *Lani* is the antecedent of *she*.

2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.

- *Him* refers to Jeremy.
- *Jeremy* is the antecedent of *him*.

3. *Crina and Rosalie* have been best friends ever since *they* were freshman in high school.

- *They* refers to *Crina and Rosalie*.
- *Crina and Rosalie* is the antecedent of *they*.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun should also be singular; however, "they" is acceptable to refer to a person of undetermined or unassumed gender.*

Incorrect: The *man* (sing.) could not pick up his dry cleaning because *they* (plur.) didn't have a receipt.
Correct: The *man* (sing.) could not pick up his try cleaning because *he* (sing.) did not have a receipt.
Correct: If *students* (plur.) want to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

*One way to get around problems with agreement in number is to pluralize the antecedent (if possible) and use "*they*" *as the pronoun.*

Table 12.11.2 -- Agreement in Person

	Singular Pronouns			Plural Pronouns		
First Person	I	me	my (mine)	we	us	our (ours)
Second Person	you	you	your (yours)	you	you	your (your)
Third Person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its	they	them	their (theirs)

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Incorrect: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *you* (2nd) should leave a tip.
Correct: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *he or she* (3rd) should leave a tip.
Correct: When *we* (1st) go to a restaurant, *I should* (1st) should leave a tip.

Exercise 1

Edit the following paragraph by correcting pronoun agreement errors in number and person.

Over spring break I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a butterfly exhibit at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular. The following are some common indefinite pronouns.

Table 12.11.3 -- Common Indefinite Pronouns

all	each one	few	nothing	several
any	each other	many	one	some
anybody	either	neither	one another	somebody
anything	everybody	nobody	oneself	someone
both	everyone	none	other	something

each	everything	no one	others	anyone

Collective Noun Agreement

Collective nouns (also known as noncount nouns -- see Chapter 12.8) are usually considered singular. Look over the following examples of collective nouns.

Table 12.11.4 -- Common Collective Nouns

audience	faculty	public
band	family	school
class	government	society
committee	group	team
company	jury	tribe

Incorrect: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *their* (plur.) annual picnic next week.
Correct: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *its* (sing.) annual picnic next week.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.
8. My mother's singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Pronouns as Subjects or Objects

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. Object pronouns function as the object of a verb or of a preposition. Remember that an object pronoun should never come at the beginning of a sentence.

Table 12.11.5 -- Subject/Object Pronouns

Singular Pronouns		Plural Pronouns	
Subject	**Object**	**Subject**	**Object**
I	me	we	us
you	you	you	you
he, she, it	him, her, it	they	them

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

1. *She* loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.
2. Every summer, *they* picked up litter from national parks.

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

1. Marie leaned over and kissed *him*.
2. Jane moved *it* to the corner.

Tip

Note that a prounoun can also be the object of a preposition, just as a noun is.

- Near *them,* the children played.
- My mother stood between *us*.

Compound Subjects and Objects

Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction that, together, function as the subject of the sentence.

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

Incorrect: *Me and Harriet* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: *Harriet and I* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: Jenna accompanied *Harriet and me* on our trip.

Tip

Note that object pronouns are never used in the subject position. One way to remember this rule is to remove the other subject in a compound subject, leave only the pronoun, and see whether the sentence makes sense. For example, *Me visited the Grand Canyon last summer* sounds immediately incorrect.

Compound object pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the object of the sentence.

Incorrect: I have a good feeling about *Janice and I*.

Correct: I have a good feeling about *Janice and me*.

Note

It is correct to write *Janice and me*, as opposed to *me and Janice*. Just remember it is more polite to refer to yourself last.

Writing at Work

In casual conversation, people sometimes mix up subject and object pronouns. For instance, you might say, “Me and Donnie went to a movie last night.” However, when you are writing or speaking at work or in any other formal situation, you need to remember the distinctions between subject and object pronouns and be able to correct yourself. These subtle grammar corrections will enhance your professional image and reputation.

Exercise 3

Revise the following sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly. Copy the revised sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Write a C for each sentence that is correct.

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.

   _____

2. She and him have decided to sell their house.

   _____

3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.

   _____

4. Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.

   _____

5. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.

   _____

6. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.

   _____

7. New Year's Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.

   _____

8. You exercise much more often than me.

   _____

9. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.

   _____

10. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

    _____

Who versus *Whom*

Who or *whoever* is always act as subjects. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

Who won the marathon last Tuesday?

I wonder *who* came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, *whom* and *whomever* serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does *not* perform an action. Use *whom* or *whomever* when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

Whom did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)

From *whom* did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

Tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use *who* and *whom*, try this trick. Take the following sentence:

Who/Whom do I consider my best friend?

Reorder the sentence in your head by making it into a statement using either *he* or *him* in place of *who* or *whom*.

I consider *him* my best friend.

I consider *he* my best friend.

Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use *him*, you should use *whom*.

Exercise 4

*Complete the following sentences by adding **who** or **whom**. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.*

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.
8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

Unclear Pronoun Reference

Image by Bruno Nascimento on Unsplash.

Clear pronoun reference is necessary for strong writing. We've already talked about clear pronouns reference earlier in the stylistic chapter (Chapter 11), but it's worth repeating here. There are many instances in which the noun a pronoun refers to is unclear. This problem can be because the noun hasn't yet been mentioned, the pronoun refers back to something much earlier, you are alternating between the action of two characters, or the pronoun is indefinite and so a noun needs to be added for clarity. Below are some examples.

- As ***he*** inched toward the closet door, *Jason* became increasingly nervous because ***he*** didn't know what ***he*** would find.
- As *Jason* inched toward the closet door, he became increasingly nervous because he didn't know what he would find.

In this case, the vagueness only occurs at the beginning of the sentence until the reader reads "Jason." Then the reader knows who all of the "he's" are in this sentence. But having the first pronoun at the beginning of the sentence forces the reader to go back to the beginning -- however briefly -- to confirm what Jason did. The other uses of "he" are clear. Having a pronoun appear before the noun it represents is not ideal. However given the amount of "he" in the sentence, restructuring the sentence complete might be best.

- *Ella and Chris* went to the *outlet mall* to shop and enjoy *a movie*. After much debate, ***they*** decided to watch the latest *superhero flick*. They ate some *popcorn* and *JuJuBees*, and washed that down with some *soda*. ***It*** was exciting.
- *Ella and Chris* went to the *outlet mall* to shop and enjoy a *movie*. After much debate, ***they*** decided to watch the latest *superhero flick*. They ate some *popcorn* and *JuJuBees*, and washed that down with some soda. The afternoon was exciting.

In this case, more than one noun that appears in the earlier sentences could be exciting, or the pronoun, "it" could refer to the whole afternoon. **Pronouns must refer back to the closest noun before that is of the same type.** Because "it" refers to an object or idea, "it" could refer to anything Ella and Chris ate or drank, the movie itself, the mall, or the whole experience. The pronoun reference is unclear. "They" is fine because the only nouns "they" could refer to, given that "they" is plural, are Ella and Chris.

- Macbeth and Banquo fought each other, and as he drew his sword, he ran for his life.
- Macbeth and Banquo fought each other, and as Macbeth drew his sword, Banquo ran for his life.

Please note: this scene never happened in *Macbeth*. However, if it had, we would not know who drew his sword nor who ran for his life. In this case, it's best to use the nouns so that who did what is clear.

- *Voters* went to the *polls* on Tuesday. ***Some*** of ***them*** stopped working, however.
- *Voters* went to the *polls* on Tuesday. ***Some*** of *the polling stations* stopped working, however.

Because both nouns are plural, and "some of them" refers to a few of a group, the pronouns could refer to either the voters, themselves, or the polling stations. We don't know if some of the voters didn't work because they were going to vote or whether some of the polling stations stopped working, the latter of which would be a big problem. In this case, it's best to state the noun rather than use a prnoun.

Exercise 5

Rewrite the following sentences to the best of your ability to make the pronoun reference clear.

1. Although the ice cream and sauce were delicious, Candy worried about how many calories it had.
2. Stunned by the beauty of the Northern Lights, Vikram decided to stay there a week longer for his vacation.
3. Daffodils, tulips, and anemones are all beautiful spring flowers, and they were Tanya's favorites.
4. This is where the meeting of the minds can occur.
5. Noor was overwhelmed by all of the things for sale at the warehouse store. There was food, clothing, books, electronics, restaurant supplies, and even auto supplies. She didn't know where to start, but she knew she wanted some.
6. The grains of sand and shells each felt rough against her feet, but they felt good, too, until she cut herself on it.

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12.12: Apostrophes- Posession and Contractions

Apostrophes

An apostrophe (’) is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

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Video 12.12.1

Possession

An apostrophe plus the letter "s" ('s) indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add apostrophe plus s (’s).

- **Jen’s** dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.
- The **dog’s** leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.
- **Jess’s** sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in s still take the apostrophe s (’s) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in s, just add an apostrophe (’). If the plural noun does not end in s, add an apostrophe and an s (’s).

- A plural noun that ends in s: The drummers’ sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.
- Plural noun that does not end in s: The people’s votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing. Many writing instructors prefer that students not use contractions for their formal essays. Part of the reason is tone, and part of the reason is that using them can make proofreading for proper verb usage more difficult.

I **do not** like ice cream.

I **don’t** like ice cream.

Notice how the words do and not have been combined to form the contraction don’t. The apostrophe shows where the "*o*" in not has been left out, and the two words are combined with no space.

We will see you later.

We’ll see you later.

Look at Table 12.12.1, below, for some examples of commonly used contractions.

Table 12.12.1 -- Commonly Used Contractions

aren't	are not
can't	cannot
doesn't	does not
don't	do not
isn't	is not
he'll	he will
I'll	I will
it's	it is, it has
let's	let us
she'll	she will
she's	she is
there's	there is
they'll	they will
who's	who is
you'll	you will

Tip

Be careful not to confuse it's with its. It's is a contraction of the words it and is. Its is a possessive pronoun. It's cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.) The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.) When in doubt, substitute the words "it is" in a sentence. If the sentence still makes sense, use the contraction it's.

Table 12.12.2 -- Commonly Confused Contraction Spellings

Commonly Confused Contraction/Possessive Spellings	
Contraction	**Possessive**
it's (it is)	its (owned by "it")
who's (who is)	whose (owned by "who?")
there's (there is)	theirs (owned by them)

Figure: Unsplash

Don't use apostrophes with decades. Just add an "s".

Incorrect: Modern rock was popular in the *1980*'s.

Correct: Modern rock was popular in the *1980*s.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. “What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes.”

2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.

3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!

4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.

5. Each of the students responses were unique.

6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

7. On the day of the wedding, were going to rent a limo.

8. My sisters wife will make the arrangements.

9. Shes a great party organizer.

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12.13: Subject-Verb Agreement

In the workplace, you want to present a professional image. Your outfit or suit says something about you when meeting face-to-face, and your writing represents you in your absence. Grammatical mistakes in your writing or even in speaking make a negative impression on coworkers, clients, and potential employers. Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

What Is Agreement?

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

- **Number.** All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
- **Person.** All parts must match in first person (*I*), second person (*you*), or third person (*he, she, it, they*) forms.
- **Case.** All parts must match in subjective (*I, you, he, she, it, they, we*), objective (*me, her, him, them, us*), or possessive (*my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours*) forms. For more information on pronoun case agreement, see Chapter 12.10.
- **Gender.** All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form. For more information on subjects and verbs, see sections 12.2, 12.5, and 12.8. Notice that in the sentences below, the simple present tense is used. Many times, subject-verb agreement mistakes are made in this verb tense.

Singular: The cat *jumps* over the fence.
Plural: The cats *jump* over the fence.

Agreement for Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in -s. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in -s. Study the following regular verb forms in the present tense.

****Use simple present tense when writing about universal truths, texts, and movies.****

Table 12.13.1 -- Regular Verbs

Regular Verbs			
	Past	**Present**	**Future**
Simple			
First person	I walked	I walk	I will walk
Second person	You walked	You walk	You will walk
Third person singular	It walked	It walks	It will walk
Third person plural	They walked	They walk	They will walk
Perfect			
First person	I had walked	I have walked	I will have walked

Second person	You had walked	You have walked	You will have walked
Third person singular	He had walked	He has walked	He will have walked
Third person plural	They had walked	They have walked	They will have walked
Progressive			
First person	I was walking	I am walking	I will be walking
Second person	You were walking	You are walking	You will be walking
Third person singular	He was walking	He is walking	He will be walking
Third person plural	They were walking	They are walking	They will be walking
Perfect Progressive			
First person	I had been walking	I have been walking	I will have been walking
Second person	You had been walking	You have been walking	You will have been walking
Third person singular	He had been walking	He has been walking	He will have been walking
Third person plural	They had been walking	They have been walking	They will have been walking

Exercise 1

In the following sentences, choose the correct form of the verb (in parentheses) depending upon whether the subject is first, second, or third person singular or plural.

1. She _____ to work every day. (drive, simple present)

2. They _____ to call their parents to ask permission to stay out a little later. (remember, simple past)

3. Joannie and Shari _____ for the ride-share to arrive. (wait, simple present)

4. I _____ the house before company arrived. (clean, simple past)

5. You _____ the new food; believe me! (like, simple future)

6. Toddlers _____ dirt pretty often. (eat, simple present)

Agreement for Irregular Verbs

The "to be" verbs are the most common verbs in the English language. However, they are also irregular when it comes to subject-verb agreement.

"To be" verbs only carry simple past, present, and future tenses.

Table 12.13.2 -- Agreement for the "to be" Verbs

"To Be" Verbs			
	Past	**Present**	**Future**
First person	I was	I am	I will be
Second person	You were	You are	You will be
Third person singular	It was	It is	It will be
Third person plural	There were	They are	They will be

Exercise 2

*Complete the following sentences by writing the correct present tense form of **be, have,** or **do** so that the subject-verb agreement is correct. Use your own sheet of paper to complete this exercise.*

1. I _____ sure that you will succeed.
2. They _____ front-row tickets to the show.
3. He _____ a great Elvis impersonation.
4. We _____ so excited to meet you in person!
5. She _____ a fever and a sore throat.
6. You _____ not know what you are talking about.
7. You _____ all going to pass this class.
8. She _____ not going to like that.
9. It _____ appear to be the right size.
10. They _____ ready to take this job seriously

Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

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Video 12.13.1

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when:

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as *anyone* or *everyone*;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as *team* or *organization*; or
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

Compound subjects combined with *and* take a plural verb form.

Two singular subjects: Alicia and Miguel *ride* their bikes to the beach.
Two plural subjects: The girls and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.
Singular and plural subjects: Alicia and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Compound subjects combined with *or* and *nor* are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

Two singular subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor Rianna *want*s to eat at that restaurant.
Two plural subjects: Neither the kids nor the adults *want* to eat at that restaurant.
Singular and plural subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor the kids *want* to eat at that restaurant.
Plural and singular subjects: Neither the kids nor Elizabeth *want*s to eat at that restaurant.

Two singular subjects: Either you or Jason *take*s the furniture out of the garage.
Two plural subjects: Either you or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.
Singular and plural subjects: Either Jason or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.
Plural and singular subjects: Either the twins or Jason *take*s the furniture out of the garage.

Tip

If you can substitute the word *they* for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Separation of Subjects and Verbs

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a prepositional phrase:

The student with the best grades *win*s the academic awards.*
The puppy under the table *is* my favorite.

*Notice that the noun before the verb is plural, but because that word, "grades," is the object of the preposition, not the subject in the sentence. So the verb "wins" does not need to agree with "grades," it needs to agree with "student."

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a dependent clause:

The car that I bought *has* power steering and a sunroof.
The representatives who are courteous s*ell* the most tickets.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to an unspecified person, thing, or number. When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form.

However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to

use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun. View the chart to see a list of common indefinite pronouns and the verb forms they agree with.

Table 12.13.3 -- Indefinite Pronoun Agreement

Indefinite Pronouns That Always Take a Singular Verb	Indefinite Pronouns That Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb
anybody, anyone, anything	All
each	Any
everybody, everyone, everything	None
much	Some
many	
nobody, no one, nothing	
somebody, someone, something	

Singular: Everybody in the kitchen *sings* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *everybody* takes a singular verb form because *everybody* refers to a group performing the same action as a single unit.

Plural: All the people in the kitchen *sing* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *all* takes a plural verb form because *all* refers to the plural noun *people*. Because *people* is plural, *all* is plural.

Singular: All the cake *is* on the floor.

In this sentence, the indefinite pronoun *all* takes a singular verb form because *all* refers to the singular noun *cake*. Because *cake* is singular, *all* is singular.

Collective Nouns

A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and considers those people, places, or things to be one singular unit. Because collective (noncount) nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb. Some commonly used collective nouns are *group*, *team*, *army*, *flock*, *family*, and *class*.

Singular: The class *is* going on a field trip.

In this sentence, *class* is a collective noun. Although the class consists of many students, the class is treated as a singular unit and requires a singular verb form.

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. In other words, the subject of the sentence may not appear where you expect it to appear. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Here or There

In sentences that begin with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb.

Here *is* my wallet!
There *are* thirty dolphins in the water.

If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with *here* or *there*; it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

My wallet *is* here!
Thirty dolphins *are* in the water.

Questions

When you ask questions, a question word (*who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*) appears first. The verb and then the subject follow.

Who *are* the people you are related to?
When *am* I going to go to the grocery store?

Tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.

When *am* I going to the grocery store? I *am* going to the grocery store tonight.

Exercise 3

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write OK. Copy the corrected sentence or the word OK on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time.

   _____

2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.

   _____

3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.

   _____

4. My family are moving to California.

   _____

5. Here is the lake I told you about.

   _____

6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.

   _____

7. Which room is bigger?

   _____

8. When are the movie going to start?

   _____

9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.

   _____

10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

    _____

Exercise 4

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph. Copy the paragraph on a piece of notebook paper and make corrections.

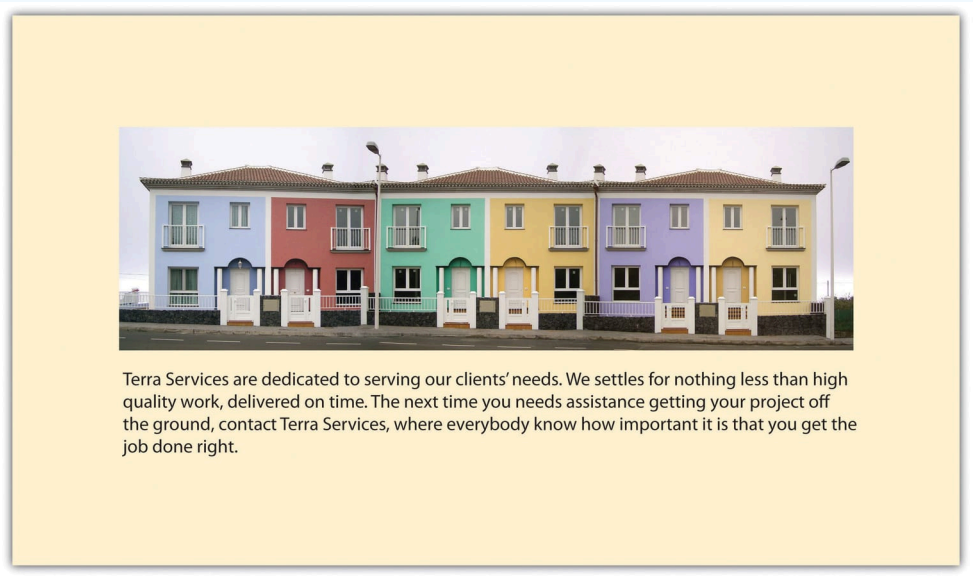
Dear Hiring Manager,

I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by e-mail or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,

Felicia Fellini

Writing at Work



Image

Imagine that you are a prospective client and that you saw this ad online. Would you call Terra Services to handle your next project? Probably not! Mistakes in subject-verb agreement can cost a company business. Paying careful attention to grammatical details ensures professionalism that clients will recognize and respect.

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12.14: Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words that bring your writing to life.

Adjectives and Adverbs

An adjective is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It often answers questions such as *which one*, *what kind*, or *how many?*

1. The *green* sweater belongs to Iris.

2. She looks *beautiful*.

- In sentence 1, the adjective *green* describes the noun *sweater*.
- In sentence 2, the adjective *beautiful* describes the pronoun *she*.

An adverb is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs frequently end in *-ly*. They answer questions such as *how*, *to what extent*, *why*, *when*, and *where*.

3. Bertrand sings *horribly*.
4. My sociology instructor is *extremely* wise.

5. He threw the ball *very* accurately.

- In sentence 3, *horribly* describes the verb *sings*. How does Bertrand sing? He sings *horribly*.
- In sentence 4, *extremely* describes the adjective *wise*. How *wise* is the instructor? *Extremely* wise.
- In sentence 5, *very* describes the adverb *accurately*. How *accurately* did he throw the ball? *Very* accurately.

Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by adding an adjective or adverb. Identify the word as an adjective or an adverb (Adj, Adv).

1. Frederick _____ choked on the piece of chicken when he saw Margaret walk through the door.
2. His _____ eyes looked at everyone and everything as if they were specimens in a biology lab.
3. Despite her pessimistic views on life, Lauren believes that most people have _____ hearts.
4. Although Stefan took the criticism _____, he remained calm.
5. The child developed a _____ imagination because he read a lot of books.
6. Madeleine spoke _____ while she was visiting her grandmother in the hospital.
7. Hector's most _____ possession was his father's bass guitar from the 1970s.
8. My definition of a _____ afternoon is walking to the park on a beautiful day, spreading out my blanket, and losing myself in a good book.
9. She _____ eyed her new coworker and wondered if he was single.
10. At the party, Denise _____ devoured two pieces of pepperoni pizza and a several slices of ripe watermelon.

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Video 12.14.1

Comparative versus Superlative

Comparative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare two people or things.

1. Jorge is *thin*.

2. Steven is *thinner* than Jorge.

- Sentence 1 describes Jorge with the adjective *thin*. It is not a comparative.
- Sentence 2 compares Jorge to Steven, stating that Steven is *thinner*. So *thinner* is the comparative form of *thin*.

Form comparatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one syllable word, add *-er* to it to form the comparative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *bigger*, *faster*, and *shorter* in the comparative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *more* in front of it to form the comparative. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *more happily*, *more comfortable*, and *more jealous* in the comparative.

Superlative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare more than two people or two things.

1. Jackie is the *loudest* cheerleader on the squad.

2. Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student by her graduating class.

- Sentence 1 shows that Jackie is not just *louder* than one other person, but she is the *loudest* of all the cheerleaders on the squad.
- Sentence 2 shows that Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student of all the students in her class.

Form superlatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one-syllable word, add *-est* to form the superlative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *biggest*, *fastest*, and *shortest* in the superlative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *most* in front of it. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *most happily*, *most comfortable*, and *most jealous* in the superlative form.

Tip

Remember the following exception: If the word has two syllables and ends in *-y,* change the *-y* to an *-i* and add *-est*. For example, *happy* would change to *happiest* in the superlative form; *healthy* would change to *healthiest*.

Exercise 2

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the errors in comparative and superlative adjectives.

Our argument started on the most sunny afternoon that I have ever experienced. Max and I were sitting on my front stoop when I started it. I told him that my dog, Jacko, was more smart than his dog, Merlin. I could not help myself. Merlin never came when he was called, and he chased his tail and barked at rocks. I told Max that Merlin was the most dumbest dog on the block. I guess I was angrier about a bad grade that I received, so I decided to pick on poor little Merlin. Even though Max insulted Jacko, too, I felt I had been more mean. The next day I apologized to Max and brought Merlin some of Jacko's treats. When Merlin placed his paw on my knee and licked my hand, I was the most sorry person on the block.

Exercise 3

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct comparative or superlative adjective or adverb. Then copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

a. Denise has a (cheerful) _____ outlook on life than her husband.

b. I don't mean to brag, but I think I am the (good) _____ cook in my family.

c. Lydia is the (thoughtful) _____ person I know.

d. Italy experienced the (bad) _____ heat wave in its history last year.

e. My teacher, Ms. Beckett, is the (strange) _____ person I know, and I like that.

f. Dorian's drawing skills are (good) _____ this semester than last.

g. My handwriting is the (sloppy) _____ of all my classmates.

h. Melvin's soccer team played (badly) _____ than it did last season.

i. Josie's pen writes (smooth) _____ than mine.

j. I felt (lucky) _____ than my sister because I got in to the college of my choice.

Figure: Unsplash

Irregular Words: *Good*, *Well*, *Bad*, and *Badly*

Good, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often used incorrectly. Study the following chart to learn the correct usage of these words and their comparative and superlative forms.

Table 12.14 -- Comparatives and Superlatives

		Comparative	Superlative
Adjective	good	better	best
Adverb	well	better	best
Adjective	bad	worse	worst
Adverb	badly	worse	worst

Good versus *Well*

Good is always an adjective—that is, a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. The second sentence is correct because *well* is an adverb that tells how something is done.

Incorrect: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *good* on a test.

Correct: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *well* on a test.

Well is always an adverb that describes a verb, adverb, or adjective. The second sentence is correct because *good* is an adjective that describes the noun *score*.

Incorrect: Cecilia's team received a *well* score.

Correct: Cecilia's team received a *good* score.

Bad versus *Badly*

Bad is always an adjective. The second sentence is correct because *badly* is an adverb that tells how the speaker did on the test.

Incorrect: I did *bad* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Correct: I did *badly* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Badly is always an adverb. The second sentence is correct because *bad* is an adjective that describes the noun *thunderstorm*.

Incorrect: The coming thunderstorm looked *badly*.

Correct: The coming thunderstorm looked *bad*.

Better and *Worse*

The following are examples of the use of *better* and *worse*:

- Tyra likes sprinting *better* than long distance running.
- The traffic is *worse* in Chicago than in Atlanta.

Best and *Worst*

The following are examples of the use of *best* and *worst*:

- Tyra sprints *best* of all the other competitors.

- Peter finished *worst* of all the runners in the race.

Tip

Remember *better* and *worse* compare two persons or things. *Best* and *worst* compare three or more persons or things.

Exercise 4

*Write **good, well, bad,** or **badly** to complete each sentence. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.*

1. Donna always felt _____ if she did not see the sun in the morning.
2. The school board president gave a _____ speech for once.
3. Although my dog, Comet, is mischievous, he always behaves _____ at the dog park.
4. I thought my back injury was _____ at first, but it turned out to be minor.
5. Steve was shaking _____ from the extreme cold.
6. Apple crisp is a very _____ dessert that can be made using whole grains instead of white flour.
7. The meeting with my son's math teacher went very _____.
8. Juan has a _____ appetite, especially when it comes to dessert.
9. Magritte thought the guests had a _____ time at the party because most people left early.
10. She _____ wanted to win the writing contest prize, which included a trip to New York.

Exercise 5

Write the correct comparative or superlative form of the word in parentheses. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. This research paper is _____ (good) than my last one.
2. Tanaya likes country music _____ (well) of all.
3. My motorcycle rides _____ (bad) than it did last summer.
4. That is the _____ (bad) joke my father ever told.
5. The hockey team played _____ (badly) than it did last season.
6. Tracey plays guitar _____ (well) than she plays the piano.
7. It will go down as one of the _____ (bad) movies I have ever seen.
8. The deforestation in the Amazon is _____ (bad) than it was last year.
9. Movie ticket sales are _____ (good) this year than last.
10. My husband says mystery novels are the _____ (good) types of books.

Writing at Work 12.14.1

The irregular words *good*, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often misused along with their comparative and superlative forms *better*, *best*, *worse*, and *worst*. You may not hear the difference between *worse* and *worst*, and therefore type it incorrectly. In a formal or business-like tone, use each of these words to write eight separate sentences. Assume these sentences will be seen and judged by your current or future employer.

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12.15: Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases

Prepositions

A preposition is a word that connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. Most prepositions such as *above*, *below*, and *behind* usually indicate a location in the physical world, but some prepositions such as *during*, *after*, and *until* show location in time. Some prepositions, such as *about* and *of* can show a person's relation to an idea. Some preposition use is idiomatic, meaning that the usage is not based in a rule; rather, the usage is based in tradition.

In, At, and On

The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways.

Table 12.15.1: In

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
in	year	in 1942	country	in Zimbabwe
	month	in August	state	in California
	season	in the summer	city	in Chicago
	time of day (not with *night*)	in the afternoon		
	Degree	**Example**	**Other**	**Example**
			currency	in Yen
			language	in German

Table - On

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
on*	day	on Monday	surfaces	on the table
	date	on May 23	streets	on 124th Street
	specific days/dates	on Monday	modes of transportation	on the bus
	Degree	**Example**	**Other**	**Example**
			communication	on the radio
			concerning	on magic

Table - At

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
at	time	at five o'clock	addresses	at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
	with *night*	at night	location	at Rooney's Grill
	Degree	**Example**	**Other**	**Example**
	temperature	at 0 degrees Celcius	idiomatic	She is good at dancing

The table above also points out uses other than time and place.

Exercise 1

*On a separate piece of paper, edit the following letter from a resident to her landlord by correcting errors with **in, at**, and **on**.*

Dear Mrs. Salazar,

I am writing this letter to inform you that I will be vacating apartment 2A in 356 Maple Street at Wednesday, June 30, 2010. I will be cleaning the apartment at the Monday before I leave. I will return the keys to you on 5 p.m., sharp, at June 30. If you have any questions or specific instructions for me, please contact me in my office. I have enjoyed living at Austin, Texas, but I want to explore other parts of the country now.

Sincerely,
Milani Davis

The table below has examples of the usage of other common prepositions.

Table 12.15.2 -- Common Preposition Usage

Preposition	Space	Time	Degree (measurement)	Other
about	*all around* The dog ran about the yard.	*approximately* It is about 1:00 p.m.	*approximately* It is about 70 degrees Farenheit.	*concerning* This is a book about mathematics.
against	*contact* I plywood leaned against the house.	*conflict* I was against what Karen wanted to do.	*conflict* The fight was five against three.	*internal* He was taken against his will.
				external The team won against all odds.
above	*higher than* The tree towers above the house.		*more than* The temperature is above freezing.	*idiomatic* She is above reproach. He is above suspicion.
around	*state* The fence is around the dog run.	*approximately* I scored around 1250 on the SAT.	*approximately* I rang around four miles before pooping out.	

	action The dogs ran around the dog park.			
before	*in front of* In the painting, the buildings were before the mountains.	*earlier than* Explorers reached the South Pole before astronauts reached the moon.		
below	*lower than* The submarine was below the surface of the water.		*less than* His test scores were below average.	
between	*at some point in relation to two entities* The ball was stuck between the garbage can and the fence.	*at some point between two times* They were going to meet up between 7 and 8 p.m.	*at some point between two measurements* I weight between 150 and 160 pounds.	*idiomatic* We an keep this secret between you and me, right?
by	*near* The cafe near the corner is the best.	*no later than* Be home for dinner by 5:30 p.m.	*duplication* The inchworm moved inch by inch.	*without help* I can do my work by myself.
			degree of failure The arrow missed the target by a mile.	*alone* He went shopping by himself.
for	*goal* We set out for Australia in our yacht.	*duration* We have been together for three years.	*exchange* I bought the top for $12.	*reason* People travel to France for the art.
	distance I drove for 500 miles.			*goal/purpose* We hunted for boar.

from	*a starting point* We ran the race from the beginning to the end.	*duration* I worked from 8 to 5:30.	*beginning of range* The temperature tomorrow will range from 48 to 58 degrees.	*source* The Egyptians made paper from papyrus.
	origin I moved here from Chicago.			*cause* The ground was charred from fire.
of	*names of geographic locations or institutions* I plan to transfer to the University of California.	*before* I woke up at a quarter of six.	*portion* I would like a cup of tea.	*possessive* A friend of mine recently went on the trip of a lifetime.
				source The table was made of metal.
over	*above* She wore a shawl over her shoulders.	*spanning time* Over the break, I did a thorough house cleaning.	*more than* I had to wait more than one-half hour for my doctor.	*communication* I read my news over the Internet.
	action above The pole vaulter made it over the pole.			
through	*penetrate* The mountain lion snuck through the bushes.	*duration* Through the years, I've learned a few things.		*endurance* Through good times and bad, we make survive.
to	*direction* Kevin drove to the mountains.	*until* I slept to 7 a.m.	*amount* I will listen to the extent of my patience.	*accompany* I listened to the radio.

toward	*in the direction of* I walked toward the Northwest.	*near* It was toward 11 a.m. when things were stolen from my car.	*measurement* The snow began to melt as the temperature headed toward 40F.	*goal* People need to work together toward civil discourse.
under	*below* Moles burrow below the surface.	*less than* I will be there in under fifteen minutes	*less than* My dinner cost under $10.	*condition* She admitted to the crime under duress.
with	*alongside, near* The painting was hung parallel with window.	*together* I went with Amy to the movies.	*equal standing or ability* John kept the lead with Jordan.	*in regard to* I am happy with my purchase.
				manner They danced with style.

A beginner to prepositions may want to watch the following video, which shows the meaning of the words visually. This video mainly focuses on space and time meanings of prepositions.

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Video 12.15.1

Prepositions after Verbs

Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. In fact, some verbs require prepositions after them. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs. It is important to remember that these prepositions cannot be separated from the verb.

Table 12.15.3 - Verbs + Prepositions

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	Example
agree with	to agree with something or someone	My husband always **agrees with** me.
apologize for	to express regret for something, to say sorry about something	I **apologize for** being late.
apply for	to ask for something formally	I will **apply for** that job.

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	Example
believe in	to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something	I **believe in** educating the world's women.
care about	to think that someone or something is important	I **care about** the health of our oceans.
consist of	to be made up of certain things	My lunch **consists of** a turkey sandwich and an apple.
detract from	to make less appealing	The workload **detracts from** the salary that the job offers.
hear about	to be told about something or someone	I **heard about** the teachers' strike.
look after	to watch or to protect someone or something	Will you **look after** my dog while I am on vacation?
part with	to give away or be separated from something	I **parted with** a bookshelf of books when I moved.
rely on	to depend on	I **rely on** my alarm clock going off in the morning.
substitute for	to replace something temporarily	The flour **substitutes for** cornstarch in the gravy recipe.
talk about	to discuss something	We will **talk about** the importance of recycling.sus
speak to, with	to talk to/with someone	I will **speak to** his teacher tomorrow.
wait for	to await the arrival of someone or something	I will **wait for** my package to arrive.

Tip

It is a good idea to memorize these combinations of verbs plus prepositions. Write them down in a notebook along with the definition and practice using them when you speak.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by choosing the correct preposition with the verb.

1. Charlotte does not _____ (apologize for, believe in) aliens or ghosts.
2. It is impolite to _____ (hear about, talk about) people when they are not here.
3. Herman said he was going to _____ (believe in, apply for) the internship.
4. Jonas would not _____ (talk about, apologize for) eating the last piece of cake.
5. I _____ (care about, agree with) the environment very much

Prepositions after Adjectives

Similar to prepositions after verbs, prepositions after adjectives create expressions with distinct meanings unique to English. Remember, like prepositional verbs, these expressions also cannot be separated.

Table 12.15.4 - Adjectives + Prepositions

Adjective + Preposition	Meaning	Example
afraid of	to fear something	I am **afraid of** big dogs that bare their teeth.

Adjective + Preposition	Meaning	Example
angry at, about	to feel or show anger toward (or about) someone or something	I am **angry about** the oil spill in the ocean.
confused about	to be unable to think with clarity about someone or something.	Shawn was **confused about** the concepts presented in class.
content with	to be satisfied with	I am **content with** the grade in my math class.
to be dependent on	to be reliant on something	The ex-smoker was **dependent on** her oxygen tank to breathe.
disappointed in, with	to feel dissatisfaction with someone or something	I was **disappointed in** my husband because he voted for that candidate.
dressed in	to clothe the body	He was **dressed in** a pin-striped suit.
to be free from/or	not shackled to something someone finds burdensome	I was **free from** my obligations for the summer.
happy for	to show happiness for someone or something	I was **happy for** my sister who graduated from college.
interested in	giving attention to something, expressing interest	I am **interested in** musical theater.
jealous of	to feel resentful or bitter toward someone or something (because of their status, possessions, or ability)	I was **jealous of** her because she always went on vacation.
to be sorry for	to have pity or regret	I am **sorry for** the things I said.
thankful for	to express thanks for something	I am **thankful for** my wonderful friends.
tired of	to be disgusted with, have a distaste for	I was **tired of** driving for hours without end.
worried about	to express anxiety or worry about something	I am **worried about** my father's health.

Note:

The following adjectives are always followed by the preposition *at*:

- Good

She is really ***good at*** chess.

- Excellent

Henry is ***excellent at*** drawing.

- Brilliant

Mary Anne is ***brilliant at*** playing the violiin.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition with adjective.

1. Meera was deeply _____ (interested in, thankful for) marine biology.
2. I was _____ (jealous of, disappointed in) the season finale of my favorite show.
3. Jordan won the race, and I am _____ (happy for, interested in) him.
4. The lawyer was _____ (thankful for, confused about) the details of the case.
5. Chloe was _____ (dressed in, tired of) a comfortable blue tunic.

Idiomatic Preposition Usage

The following phrases -- many of them noun phrases -- are expressed in a particular way and should be memorized. There isn't a rule or particular that determines the preposition to use; thus, the whole phrase is an idiom and should be memorized together.

Table 12.15.5 -- Idiomatic Prepositions

Idiomatic Phrase	Example
in the end	**In the end**, the whole disagreement was a misunderstanding.
talked about (**not** talked *on*)	The president **talked about** current events.
in case of	**In case of** fire, break the glass.
in charge of	The principal was **in charge of** the high school.
in favor of	Most students were **in favor of** starting school at 9 a.m.
on account of	We were late **on account of** a broken down bus.*
on behalf of	We present this plaque **on behalf of** the city council.
in the course of	**In the course of** completing the project, we discovered some other problems.
in the habit of	I am **in the habit of** emailing people back within a day.
in the name of	Sue donated flowers **in the name of** her aunt, who had died.
on the advice of	I am quitting vaping **on the advice of** my doctor.
on the basis of	I am cancelling this subscription **on the basis of** cost.
on the strength of	The correlation was made **on the strength of** the data.

*Note that a noun or noun phrase must be used after *on account of* as the object of the preposition. Sometimes student try to follow this phrase with an entire sentence, which is not grammatically correct.

Prepositional Phrases

Most of the time, prepositions begin prepositional phrases, which give more information about something in a sentence. As mentioned above, sometimes the verb you use requires a prepositional phrase after the verb. The subject of a sentence can never be the noun in a prepositional phrase. The subject is part of the core of the sentence, and the prepositional phrase is outside of that core. For more information , please see "Word Order and Sentence Structure" in section 12.2.

Example 12.15.1

Subject verb preposition article noun(object of prep) infinitive gerund

Karen drove to the mountains to go skiing.

Sentence core prepositional phrase verbal phrase

Prepositions always must be followed by a noun in a prepositional phrase. Many times that noun will also be preceded by an article and/or an adjective.

Exercise 4

Underline the prepositional phrases in the following sentences. Do not underline any words that are not part of a prepositional phrase.

1. Under the moonlight, the coyotes howled and yipped.
2. I must finish my paper by Tuesday night.
3. I felt on top of the world when I learned I had one a prize!
4. Bill and Jordan thought they could play some basketball on Thursday after class.
5. Chihuahuas and pit bulls are popular dogs, but unfortunately, too many of them fill up animal shelters throughout the country.
6. Marta and Denise work toward understanding each others' points of view.

Exercise 5

Underline the prepositional phrases in the following sentences. Do not underline any words that are not part of a prepositional phrase.

1. Monica told us about her trip.

2. I hope we have sunshine throughout the summer.

3. The panther climbed up the tree.

4. The little boy was standing behind his mother's legs.

5. We stayed awake until dawn.

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12.16: Commas

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the comma. The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

- **Introductory word:** Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- **Lists:** The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind. (Note -- the comma before "and" in a list is called an Oxford comma and is an optional style choice.)
- **Coordinating adjectives:** He was tired, hungry, and late.
- **Conjunctions in compound sentences:** The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- **Interrupting words:** I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters:** The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945, in San Francisco, California.
- **Modifying phrases:** Sam focused on the detailed brush work, consisting as it did of many tiny dots.

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Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence (usually beginning with the subject) begins.

Example: Without spoiling the surprise**,** we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, *without spoiling the surprise* is an introductory phrase, while *we need to tell her to save the date* is the main clause. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma still follows the introductory word.

Example: Ironically**,** she already had plans for that day.

Exercise 1

Look for the introductory word or phrase. On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Every year we go camping in the woods.
5. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
6. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
7. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.

8. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word *and* before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item. Also, the comma before the and is optional.

Examples

- We'll need to get flour**,** tomatoes**,** and cheese at the store.
- The pizza will be topped with olives**,** peppers**,** and pineapple chunks.
- We could add some bacon, prosciutto, etc.

Writing at Work

Many workplaces have style guides. Whether you place a comma before the "and" before the last item in a list of items depends on the style guide your workplace uses. Note that many people are picky about the use of the "Oxford comma," but it really is a style choice. Howvever, if you end a list of items with "etc." to indicate other items that aren't mentioned, always use a comma before "etc." When writing at work, follow the style guide your workplace uses regarding whether to use a comma in this circumstance.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word *and* does not always need to be before the last adjective.

Examples

- It was a bright**,** windy**,** clear day.
- Our kite glowed red**,** yellow**,** and blue in the morning sunlight.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are used to join two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by one of the coordinating conjunctions: *for*, *and*, *not, but, or, yet, so*. For more information and practice, see "Coordination and Subordination" in Chapter 11. Note that a comma is not used before conjunctions that join a phrase to an independent clause.

Commas joining two independent clauses:

- He missed class today**,** and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.
- He says his fever is gone**,** but he is still very tired.

No comma needed when joining a phrase to a clause:

- He will take one more day off of school and work to recover.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, create a compound sentence by combining the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.

   _____

2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.

   _____

3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.

   _____

4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.

   _____

5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.

   _____

6. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.

   _____

7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.

   _____

8. I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.

   _____

9. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.

   _____

10. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

    _____

Commas before and after Modifying Words and Phrases

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase. This may be a parenthetical thought (an aside) or a modifying phrase. These types of words and phrases can appear at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

Examples:

- If you can believe it**,** people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.
- Luckily**,** some people questioned that theory.

When modifying phrases come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

- An Italian astronomer**,** Galileo**,** proved that Earth orbited the sun.
- We have known**,** for hundreds of years now**,** that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

Exercise 4

On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and insert commas to separate the modifying phrases from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and e-mails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

Examples:

- The letter is postmarked May 4**,** 2001.
- Her birthday is May 5.
- He visited the country in July 2009.
- I registered for the conference on March 7**,** 2010**,** so we should get our tickets soon.

Also use commas when writing addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

Examples:

- We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane**,** Hope**,** Missouri 70832.
- After moving to Boston**,** Massachusetts**,** Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When writing an e-mail or a letter, add a comma after the greeting word or the person's name. Also include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Hello,
I would like more information about your job posting.
Thank you,
Anita Al-Sayf

Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,
Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.
Sincerely,
Jack Fromont

Exercise 5

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2010
Alexa Marché
14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6
New Castle Maine 90342

Dear Mr. Timmons

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time. Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you

Alexa

Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

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12.17: Semicolons, Colons, Question Marks, and Exclamation Marks

Semicolons

In addition to periods and commas, another punctuation mark that you will encounter (though less often) is the semicolon (;). Like most punctuation marks, the semicolon can be used in a variety of ways but in generally it can only be used where a period could be used. However, a semicolon functions differently than a period or a comma. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but also more of a relationship between the two ideas. Think of it more as a connector than a separator. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath, just like a period.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

You can use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses without a coordinating or subordinating conjunction. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence. However, semicolons aren't used often, so use this choice only occasionally, such as when the logic that holds two ideas together is so obvious that it doesn't need to be indicated with a coordinator or subordinator. Another place to use a semicolon is when you use a transitional adverb to show the relationship between two ideas.

Correct: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**;** appearances are important.

Choppy: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**.** Appearances are important.

Incorrect: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**,** appearances are important.

In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Correct: I felt I should wear formal clothes to the interview; however, the interview was on a Friday when people dress more casually.

Correct but somewhat choppy: I felt I should wear formal clothes to the interview. However, the interview was on a Friday when people dress more casually.

Incorrect: I felt I should wear formal clothes to the interview, however, the interview was on a Friday when people dress more casually.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

Correct: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey**;** green, brown, and black**;** or red, green, and brown.

Incorrect: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

Tip:

Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions, such as *and,* or, and *but*.

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Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write "OK."

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Colons

The colon (:) is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes that are introduced by a complete sentence, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

- Dear Hiring Manager:
- To: Human Resources
- From: Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

- The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.
- I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like "such as" or "for example."

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Tip:

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Proper noun: We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from Hamlet: “To thine own self be true.”

Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother’s cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect with phrase: The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

Correct with phrase: The recipe is simple: tomato, basil, and avocado.

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Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write "OK."

1. Don’t give up you never know what tomorrow brings.

2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.

3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.

4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.

5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.

6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.

7. The boss’s message was clear Lateness would not be tolerated.

8. Next semester, we will read some more contemporary authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Walker.

9. My little sister said what we were all thinking “We should have stayed home.”

10. Trust me I have done this before.

Question Marks

A question mark (?) should end a question. But sometimes we are so used to putting periods at the ends of our sentence, that in the heat of writing an essay, we accidentally place periods at the ends of questions as well. And sometimes, the construction of a sentence can make it unclear whether the sentence is a question or not, so we may just default to using the period. This section (and the video) explain when to use a question mark in the more sophisticated and formal writing you do in college.

Direct Questions

If a sentence is constructed in the form of a question, it usually begins with a question word, such as *is, are, did, does, do, where, who, why, when, what, was, were, would, could,* or *how.* If a sentence begins with one of these words, it should end with a question mark. (If you have a question about the construction of questions -- or interrogative sentences -- see "Questions and Negative Statements" in section 12.3.

Examples:

- Why was Galileo put in jail after he declared the earth revolved around the sun?
- Who was at the party?
- Did you get all of your homework done before you went?

Tag Questions

Tag questions are questions that are "tagged on" to a declarative statement. It may be unclear whether to place a question mark at the end of these sentences, but you should because the question ends the sentence. These types of questions are less likely to appear in formal expository writing but may very well appear in creative writing, particularly in dialog.

Examples:

- You are working during summer break, aren't you?
- I can't remember what I came into this room for. It was to gather laundry, wasn't it?

Rhetorical and Hypothetical Questions

Rhetorical and hypothetical questions are much more likely to appear in expository writing. Rhetorical questions are used to draw in a reader to a main idea or to indirectly address the reader while transitioning to a new idea. You don't expect anyone to actually answer a rhetorical question (except for maybe you at the end of your essay). Hypothetical questions give an example that hasn't actually happened. Rhetorical and hypothetical questions should have question marks at the end.

Examples:

- How much longer can we ignore the effects of climate change?
- Can't we all just get along?
- Why must countries fight with each other?
- If I were to move to the Bay Area, would my pay support my lifestyle?

String of Questions

This is when additional questions are added onto a direct question. In writing, these would generally appear in dialog. Because of this more casual and, perhaps, artful situation, you have a little more leeway with capitalization. However, you would want to place a question mark at the end of each additional question.

Example:

May I sleep overnight at Kim's? Can I stay until 10 p.m.? Until 9?

Indirect Questions

Many times indirect questions begin with the words "I wonder." They do not begin with question words. Because of this, and because they don't follow a question sentence structure, they should not take question marks at the end. They are really just declarative statements about questions, so they should take a period at the end.

Examples:

- I wonder why people can't solve their problems in a constructive manner.

- Sierra wondered what college she would be accepted to.

Direct-Indirect Questions

In this type of question, the sentence begins with a declarative statement but ends with a direct question. Because they end with direct questions, the sentences should end ith question marks.

Examples:

- Donuts are delicious, so why do they have to be so bad for you?
- The question is, are we going to get there on time?

YouTube Video

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Video 12.17.1

Exercise 3

Edit the following paragraph for question marks according to the above guidelines.

Eight-year-old Johnny was reading a book about dinosaurs, and it brought up so many questions in his head. He wondered, what is the biggest dinosaur. How did dinosaurs fly? How is it that there could be land, sea, and air dinosaurs. They all seemed to be similar whereas the animals we have now all seem so different. He hoped he could get his parents to go on a vacation to go dinosaur bone digging in Idaho. He wondered if his parents would say yes. Was it too much to ask. Johnny decided to read some more before asking his parents.

Exclamation Marks

Exclamation marks show excitement or emphasize emotion. In effect, they show tone of voice, which can be difficult to convey in writing. Have you ever written a communication -- especially a text or an email -- in which your tone was misunderstood? This can happen easily when using sarcasm. Although exclamation marks don't necessarily convey sarcasm, they can be used to indicate that tone of voice. A use that creates emphasis would be with imperative (command) sentences, in which someone is emphasizing loudly (perhaps yelling) that they really want someone to do something. More often they indicate excitement. Exclamation marks are rare in expository and college writing, which is more on the formal and less emotional side. Exclamation marks are used more often in personal communications and sometimes advertising.

Examples:

- This is a fantastic dessert!
- Wow! That was an amazing play!
- Get out of the way!

Writing at Work

Be careful when using exclamation points at work, even in instant messages and email. In the workplace, exclamation marks can be seen as too casual or as unprofessional. Never use them in a formal business letter, but -- depending on your audience, message, and purpose, you may use them occasionally in a casual email or instant message to convey enthusiasm (see "Rhetorical Analysis" in Chapter 2.7). It's best to avoid sarcasm at work, so don't use exclamation marks in an "ironic" way.

All of this assumes, of course, that you are not writing marketing content at work. Such writing is more like creative writing, so it is possible you would use exclamation marks in this context.

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12.18: Clause Joining and Punctuation

The Three Families of Joining Words

There are three families of joining words: coordinators, subordinators, and transitional adverbs. Coordinators can join phrases (not complete ideas with both a subject and verb) or clauses (complete ideas). Subordinators and transitional adverbs only join clauses. Each type of joining word takes different punctuation, and sometimes the punctuation depends on where the joining word appears in the sentence. This is part of the reason why punctuation can be so confusing!

Below is a table of common joining words. The logical relationship column represents what logical relationship the coordinator, subordinator, or transitional adverb represents, so when joining two complete ideas, you need to think about how those ideas relate to each other. After the table you will see the punctuation rules for each type.

Table 12.18 -- The Three Families of Joining Words

Logical Relationship	Coordinators (FANBOYS)	Subordinators	Transitional Adverbs
	(Can join two clauses or phrases)	(Can join two clauses)	(Can join two clauses)
Addition	and		additionally also further furthermore moreover similarly
Cause	for	as because since	
Choice/alternative	nor or		alternatively on the other hand conversely
Condition		if provided that unless	otherwise

Logical Relationship	Coordinators (FANBOYS)	Subordinators	Transitional Adverbs
Contrast	but yet	although even if even though though whereas while	alternatively conversely however instead nevertheless nonetheless otherwise on the other hand rather still
Effect/result	so	in order to (that) in that so that	as a result consequently hence therefore thus
Time		before after	afterward first next

Coordinators

Coordinators can join two clauses or two phrases. There are only seven coordinators: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So. You can remember them by this acronym:

F A N B O Y S

How to punctuate coordinators:

Only use a comma if you are using a coordinator to join two clauses. No commas is needed at all if you are joining two phrases. Here are some examples with brackets around the clauses and phrases.

[I usually am afraid of dogs]**, but** [I love Rex]. (Joining two *clauses*)

[Roses are red]**, and** [violets are blue]. (Joining two *clauses*)

[The prickly rose] **and** [the lengthy brambles] scratched my skin. (Joining two *phrases*)

The following is a very tricky example:

{Both [dogs'] **and** [cats'] instincts have been crippled by humans' need to make these animals dependent upon us}**, so** {they rely on us for [their every need] **and** even for [emotional satisfaction]}. (Joining 2 *phrases, 2 clauses, 2 phrases)*

Watch Out! Students tend to overuse "and" and "but," yet they neglect the other coordinators that may more effectively show the relationship between their ideas.

Exercise 1

Join the following sentence pairs with a ***coordinating conjunction*** *that represents the correct logic, and punctuate the new sentence correctly. Please do this on a separate piece of paper.*

1. Darcy went to the animal shelter. She wanted a new dog.
2. She loved her previous dog. He had passed away.
3. She had mourned for a while. Now she was ready for a new pet.
4. She played with a Yorkie. She played with a Terrier mix.
5. She couldn't decide whether to adopt a big dog. She couldn't deicde whether to adopt a smaller dog.
6. They were both so sweet. She had to make a choice.
7. In the end, she decided on the Terrier mix. He seemed like a perfect mix of being snuggly, loving, and protective.

Subordinators

Subordinators de-emphasize the clause they are attached to and emphasize the other clause. Only use a comma between the clauses when the sentence begins with a subordinator. If the subordinator is in the middle of the sentence, don't use any punctuation with it.

How to punctuate subordinators:

> **Although** [I usually am afraid of dogs], [I love Rex].

In this case, the subordinator "although" is joining two clauses by being in front of them both. It de-emphasizes the fact that the writer is usually afraid of dogs because that is the clause the subordinator begins. A comma is placed between the two clauses because the subordinator is at the beginning of the sentence.

> [I love Rex] **although** [I usually am afraid of dogs].

Here, the subordinator "although" can also join two clauses by being between them although it is still at the beginning of the clause it de-emphasizes. No comma separates the two clauses.

Another example

> **Because** [I was hungry], [I ate a sandwich].

> [I ate a sandwich] **because** [I was hungry].

To repeat: Subordinators can join two clauses by being in front of both or by being in between them. If the *subordinator is in front*, **the commas separates the two clauses.** If the *subordinator is in the middle*, **no commas is needed.** Subordinators can never appear at the end of a sentence.

Exercise 2

Join the following sentence pairs with a ***subordinating conjunction*** *that represents the correct logic, and punctuate the new sentence correctly. Please do this on a separate piece of paper.*

1. Darcy brought home her new dog, Chumley. She went to the store to get supplies.

2. The pet store allowed dogs in the store. Darcy brough Chumley with her.
3. Chumley was a little overwhelmed with the new situation. He became very quiet and put his tail between his legs.
4. Darcy though he might need to go potty. He might be afraid.
5. She didn't want to bring Chumley back to the car. She thought doing so might scare him.
6. Darcy purchased only the supplies they reall needed. They went home to get settled.

Transitional Adverbs

Transitional adverbs indicate logical relationships between clauses but -- unlike coordinators and subordinators -- can move around and create various effects in the sentence.

Transitional adverbs always take some kind of punctuation *after* them. This is how to punctuate transitional adverbs:

- [Most dogs scare me]. **However**, [Rex is an exception].

(The first clause ends with a period. The second clauses begins with the transitional adverb, which is capitalized and has a comma after it.)

- [Most dogs scare me]; **however,** [Rex is an exception].

(The first clause ends with a semi-colon. The second clause begins with the transitional adverb, which is lower case and has a comma after it.)

- [Most dogs scare me]; [Rex, **however,** is an exception].

(The first clause ends with a semi-colon. The transitional adverb interrupts the second clause and has commas around it to emphasize the contrast.)

- [Most dogs scare me]; [Rex is an exception, **however**].

(The first clause ends with a semi-colon. The transitional adverb appears at the end of the sentence with a comma before it and a period after it. Placing the transitional adverb at the end of the sentence de-emphasizes the contrast.

In these examples, notice that the transition word could be placed in several different places in the second clause. *The ability to move around and still sound right is how you know it is a transition word!* You can't do this with coordinators or subordinators.

Notice that when a transition word *begins the second clause*, **the punctuation before the transition word is either a semi-colon or a period.** If the transition word *is in the middle of a clause*, **commas surround the transition word.** If the transition word is *at the end of the second clause,* **a comma comes before it and a period after.**

Exercise 3

*Join the following sentence pairs with a **transitional adverb** that represents the correct logic, and punctuate the new sentence correctly. Please do this on a separate piece of paper.*

1. Darcy decided to take Chumley to training. She wasn't sure what level of class they should attend.
2. He knew the commands "sit," "stay," and "heel." He did not know how to walk by other dogs politely.
3. She had not worked with Chumley. She had taken classes with her previous dog.
4. She explained this to the SPCA representative, who could not really observe Chumley in action. The representative recommended taking the beginning class.
5. Chumley and Darcy's first class went well. They decided to continue and ultimately finished the course.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 4

In the following paragraph, punctuate the various types of joining words correctly.

After finishing the first dog/people training course at the SPCA Darcy decided to sign up Chumley for the next level class, which required more socialization. Darcy knew this would be good experience for Chumley, because he growled at other dogs when she took him on walks. Because of this she started walking across the street whenever she saw another dog approoach. As a result Chumley received less socialization. She was worried about whether the strategies from class would work on the other hand if she didn't bring him to the class his behavior would not get better because he could only learn with other dogs around him. The first session did not go well therefore the instructor asked Darcy and Chumley to work one-on-one with a trainer. Although, Darcy knew this would be more expensive, she figured it was kind of like having a child: sometimes you have to pay for things you'd rather not pay for. In the end, it would be the best for both of them.

Contrast, Concession, and Emphasis

Contrast: To emphasize the difference between two things

Concession: The act of yielding a point or a fact in an argument

The difference between contrast and concession is a matter of purpose. Think of a line or a range made up of intention (or your purpose for writing). On the left side of that line is explanation. On the other end of the range is "convincing." If you are just trying to explain the difference between two valid thoughts, you are contrasting them (although the second item listed will receive more emphasis). However, if you are showing the difference between the two in order to convince someone that one is better than the other, you show not only that they are different, and perhaps both valid, but that one is better for some reason. In this case, you would join the two ideas by using a concessive joiner, such as those presented below.

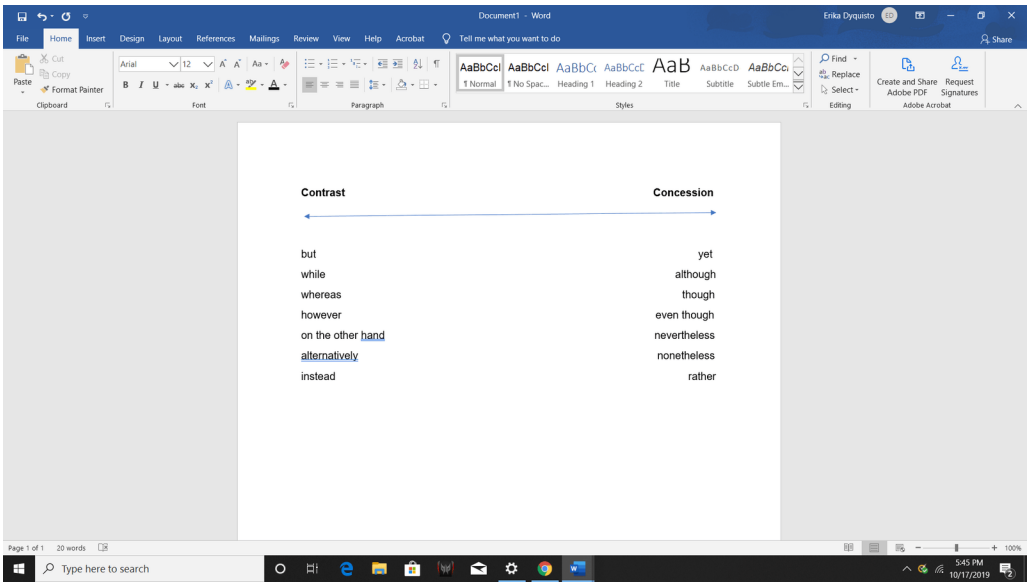

Figure: by Erika Dyquisto

When using coordinators and transitional adverbs, whichever clause is listed second is emphasized. When using subordinators, whichever clause the subordinator is NOT attached to is emphasized. So, when trying to join two clauses to emphasize one over the other, you need to consider whether you are contrasting or conceding and what type of word you are using to join the clauses. That will help determine the placement of the clause you emphasize.

Exercise 5

On a separate piece of paper, join the following sentences by adding an appropriate joining word and, if necessary, rewriting so the order emphasizes what you are asked to emphasize.

1. The word “run” can be a noun or a verb; “run” is a verb when it is showing an action. “Run” is a noun when it refers to something dripping down, like paint.

(Show contrast and emphasize the second sentence.)

2. Some students prefer to work in groups. Others prefer to work solo.

(Show contrast and emphasize the first sentence.)

3. Some people still argue about whether climate changes are caused by humans. Others are trying to plan for the future assuming that climate change is inevitable.

(Show concession emphasizing the second sentence.)

4. Commercial and industrial users with on-site energy systems do not rely on the utility grid and distant power plants. An on-site power system requires an upfront investment of at least $4 million.

(Show concession emphasizing the first sentence.)

5. Gene editing technology has enormous potential to cure genetic diseases. Such technologies could change the genetic blueprint that will be passed on to future generations.

(Show contrast emphasizing the sentence you choose to emphasize – underline the sentence you choose to emphasize.)

Answers

Exercise 3

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12.19: Extra Punctuation Practice

Run-Ons and Fragments

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, identify each sentence as a fragment, a run-on, or correct (no error). Then rewrite the paragraph by correcting the sentence fragments and run-ons.

My favorite book is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, he was born in 1894 and died in 1963 _____. Written in 1931 _____. A futuristic society where humans are born out of test tubes and kept in rigid social classes _____. This may not seem like a humorous premise for a novel, but Huxley uses satire, which is a type of humor that is used to make a serious point _____. The humans in *Brave New World* learn through sleep teaching, Huxley calls this "hypnopedia" _____. Everyone is kept "happy" in the brave new world by taking a pill called soma, there is one character named John the Savage who does not take soma _____. because he comes from a different part of the world where there is no technology, and he believes in natural ways of living _____. It turns out that John has a big problem with the brave new world and how people live there _____. Will he be able to survive living there, well you will have to read the novel to find out _____. *Brave New World* is considered a classic in English literature, it is one of the best novels I have ever read _____.

Commas and Other Punctuation

Exercise 2

Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding the correct punctuation. The headings will let you know which type of punctuation mistakes to look for. If the sentence does not need corrections, write OK.

Commas

a. The wedding will be July 13 2012.
b. The date by the way is the anniversary of the day that they met.
c. The groom the bride and their parents are all planning the event.
d. Actually all of their friends and relatives are involved in the planning.
e. The bride is a baker so she will be making the wedding cake herself.
f. The photography the catering and the music will all be done by friends.

Semicolons

a. Some people spend a lot of money hiring people for wedding services they are lucky to have such talented friends.
b. The flowers will be either roses, daisies, and snapdragons orchids, tulips, and irises or peonies and lilies.

Colons and Quotation Marks

a. There will be three colors for the wedding: white, black, and gold.
b. They've finally narrowed down the dinner choices salmon, steak, and a vegan stew.
c. Their wedding invitations contained the following quote from the Roman poet Ovid If you want to be loved, be lovable

d. The invitations said that the wedding would be "outdoor casual."
e. "What exactly does 'outdoor casual' mean?" I asked the bride.
f. She told me to dress comfortably and wear shoes that do not sink into the ground.

Parentheses

a. On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever and I've known her for fifteen years.
b. All the details were perfect in my opinion.

Dashes

a. Everyone danced at the wedding except my mother.
b. It was to be expected she just had hip surgery.

Hyphens

a. The groom danced with his new mother in law.
b. It was a spectacular, fun filled day for everyone.

Identifying and Correcting Punctuation Errors

Exercise 3

Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed.

a. My mothers garden is full of beautiful flowers.
b. She has carefully planted several species of roses peonies and irises.
c. She is especially proud of her thirty year old Japanese maple tree.
d. I am especially proud of the sunflowers I planted them!
e. You should see the birds that are attracted to the garden hummingbirds, finches, robins, and sparrows.
f. I like to watch the hummingbirds they are my favorite.
g. We spend a lot of time in the garden planting weeding and just enjoying the view.
h. Each flower has its own personality some seem shy and others seem bold.
i. Arent gardens wonderful?
j. You should come visit sometime Do you like to garden?

Exercise 4

The following paragraph contains errors in punctuation. On your own sheet of paper, correct the paragraph by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed. There may be more than one way to correct the paragraph.

May 18 2011

Dear Hiring Manager

Allow me to introduce myself in my previous position I was known as the King of Sales. I hope to earn the same title within your company. My name is Frances Fortune. I have thirteen years experience in corporate sales and account management. I have been the top rated seller for two years in a row in my previous position. Clients recognize me as dependable honest and resourceful. I have a strong work ethic and great interpersonal skills. I excel at goal setting and time management. However you don't have to take my word for it I will be happy to provide personal and professional references upon request. Youre welcome to contact my previous employer to inquire about my work performance. I look forward to speaking with you in person in the near future.

Sincerely

Frances Fortune

Exercise 5

Read the following paragraph. Edit by adding apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens where needed. There may be more than one correct way to edit some sentences. Consider how the punctuation you choose affects the meaning of the sentence. Then compare your edits with a partner.

I was a little nervous about the interview it was my first in years. I had to borrow my roommates suit, but it fit me well. A few days ago, I started to research the companys history and mission. I felt like I was well qualified for the job. When I arrived, I shook hands with the interviewer she had a strong grip! It nearly caught me off guard, but I did my best to smile and relax. I was a little distracted by all the books in the womans office she must have had a hundred books in that tiny room. However, I think my responses to her questions were good. Ill send her an e-mail to thank her for her time. Hopefully shell call me soon about the position.

Exercise 6

Review some of the recent or current assignments you have completed for school or work. Look through recent business and personal e-mails. Does your work contain any errors in punctuation? Correct the errors and compile a list of the types of errors you are correcting (commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, parentheses, dashes, hyphens, etc.). Use this list as a reference for the types of punctuation marks that you should review and practice.

If you do not find many errors—great! You can still look for ways to add interest to your writing by using dashes, semicolons, colons, and parentheses to create a variety of sentence lengths and structures.

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12.20: Run-On Sentences and Fragments

Run-on Sentences

A *run-on* sentence is a sentence with more than one clause and has not be properly punctuated. It also may include too much information for the reader to take in. One type of run-on that you've probably heard of is the *comma splice*, in which two independent clauses are joined by a comma without a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *or*, *but*, etc.).

Let's look at a few examples of run-on sentences:

- Often, choosing a topic for a paper is the hardest part it's a lot easier after that. (This sentence is missing punctuation.)
- Sometimes, books do not have the most complete information, it is a good idea then to look for articles in specialized periodicals. (This sentence doesn't have the right type of punctuation.)
- She loves skiing but he doesn't. (This sentence doesn't have the right type of punctuation.)

All three of these have two independent clauses. Each clause should be separated from another with a period, a semicolon, or a comma and a coordinating conjunction:

- Often, choosing a topic for a paper is the hardest part. It's a lot easier after that.
- Sometimes, books do not have the most complete information; it is a good idea then to look for articles in specialized periodicals.
- She loves skiing, but he doesn't.

Note: Not every long sentence is a run-on sentence. For example, look at this quote from *The Great Gastby*:

Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

If you look at the punctuation, you'll see that this quote is a single sentence. F. Scott Fitzgerald used commas and semicolons in such a way that, despite its great length, the sentence is grammatically sound. Length is no guarantee of a run-on sentence.

Common Causes of Run-Ons

We often write run-on sentences because we sense that the sentences involved are closely related, and dividing them with a period just doesn't seem right. We may also write them because the parts seem too short to need any division, such as in "She loves skiing but he doesn't." However, "She loves skiing" and "he doesn't" are both independent clauses, so they need to be divided by a comma and a coordinating conjunction—not just a coordinating conjunction by itself.

Another common cause of run-on sentences is mistaking adverbial conjunctions for coordinating conjunctions. For example if we were to write, "She loved skiing, however he didn't," we would have produced a comma splice. The correct sentence would be "She loved skiing; however, he didn't."

Fixing Run-On Sentences

Before you can fix a run-on sentence, you'll need to identify the problem. When you write, carefully look at each part of every sentence. Are the parts independent clauses, or are they dependent clauses or phrases? Remember, only independent clauses can stand on their own. This also means they have to stand on their own; they can't run together without correct punctuation.

Let's take a look at a few run-on sentences and their revisions:

1. Most of the hours I've earned toward my associate's degree do not transfer, however, I do have at least some hours the university will accept.

2. The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel they tend to be more susceptible to rust.
3. Some people were highly educated professionals, others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.

Let's start with the first sentence. This is a comma-splice sentence. The adverbial conjunction *however* is being treated like a coordinating conjunction. There are two easy fixes to this problem. The first is to turn the comma before *however* into a period. If this feels like too hard of a stop between ideas, you can change the comma into a semicolon instead.

- Most of the hours I've earned toward my associate's degree do not transfer. However, I do have at least some hours the University will accept.
- Most of the hours I've earned toward my associate's degree do not transfer; however, I do have at least some hours the University will accept.

The second sentence is a run-on as well. "The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel" and "they tend to be more susceptible to rust." are both independent clauses. The two clauses are very closely related, and the second clarifies the information provided in the first. The best solution is to insert a colon between the two clauses:

The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel: they tend to be more susceptible to rust.

What about the last example? Once again we have two independent clauses. The two clauses provide contrasting information. Adding a conjunction could help the reader move from one kind of information to another. However, you may want that sharp contrast. Here are two revision options:

- Some people were highly educated professionals, while others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.
- Some people were highly educated professionals. Others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.

Exercise 1

Identify the run-on sentences in the following paragraph:

I had the craziest dream the other night. My cousin Jacob and I were on the run from the law. Apparently we were wizards and the law was cracking down on magic. So, we obviously had to go into hiding but I lost track of Jacob and then I got picked up by a cop. But I was able to convince him that the government was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Run-On Sentences vs. Comma Splices

In English, a clause is a group of words containing a subject and verb. A sentence is a clause that expresses a complete thought. This type of clause is known as an independent clause. Problems occur when independent clauses are joined together incorrectly. Study the following examples.

Independent Clauses	Incorrect Sentences	Problem
The students worked hard on the project. They deserved a high score.	The students worked hard on the project they deserved a high score.	**Run-on**
The students worked hard on the project. They deserved a high score.	The students worked hard on the project, they deserved a high score.	**Comma Splice**

Explanation: The first incorrect sentence is a **RUN-ON** sentence. The two independent clauses have been joined together without a connector or any punctuation marks. The second incorrect sentence is known as a **COMMA SPLICE**. Here, a comma has been incorrectly used to join the two independent clauses together. There are four ways to correct such errors.

1. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

Example: She worked hard on the project, **so** they deserved a high score.

2. Use a semi-colon followed by a conjunctive adverb, such as: *consequently, however, on the other hand, nevertheless, meanwhile,* and *therefore*.

The formula is **semi-colon** + **conjunctive adverb** + **comma**.

Example: The students worked hard on the project**; consequently,** they deserved a high score.

3. Use a semi-colon without a connecting word.

Example: The students worked hard on the project**;** they deserved a high score.

4. Create two sentences by adding a period at the end of the first independent clause and capitalizing the first word of the second independent clause.

Example: The students worked hard on the project**. T**hey deserved a high score.

Sentence Fragments

Fragments are simply grammatically incomplete sentences—they are phrases and dependent clauses. We talked about phrases and clauses a bit in Section 12.2, "Word Order and Sentence Structure." These are grammatical structures that cannot stand on their own: They need to be connected to an independent clause to work in writing. So how can we tell the difference between a sentence and a sentence fragment? And how can we fix fragments when they already exist?

Common Causes of Fragments

Part of the reason we write in fragments is because we often speak that way. However, there is a difference between writing and speech, and it is important to write in complete sentences. Additionally, fragments often happen in writing because a fragment may already seem too long.

Non-finite verbs (gerunds, participles, and infinitives) can often trip people up as well. Since non-finite verbs don't act like verbs, we don't count them as verbs when we're deciding if we have a phrase or a clause. Let's look at a few examples of these:

- Running away from my mother.
- To ensure your safety and security.
- Beaten down since day one.

Even though all of the above have non-finite verbs, they're phrases, not clauses. In order for these to be clauses, they would need an additional verb that acts as a verb in the sentence.

Words like *since*, *when*, and *because* turn an independent clause into a dependent clause. For example "I was a little girl in 1995" is an independent clause, but "Because I was a little girl in 1995" is a dependent clause. This class of word includes the following:

after	although	as	as far as	as if	as long as	as soon as
as though	because	before	even if	even though	every time	if
in order that	since	so	so that	than	though	unless
until	when	whenever	where	whereas	wherever	while

Relative pronouns, such as *that* and *which*, do the same type of thing as those listed above.

Coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS) can also cause problems. If you start a sentence with a coordinating conjunction, make sure that it is followed a complete clause, not just a phrase!

As you're identifying fragments, keep in mind that command sentences are *not* fragments, despite not having a subject. Commands are the only grammatically correct sentences that lack a subject:

- Drop and give me fifty!

- Count how many times the word *fragrant* is used during commercial breaks.

In this case, the subject "you" is implied.

Fixing Sentence Fragments

Let's take a look at a couple of examples:

1. Ivana appeared at the committee meeting last week. And made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product.
2. The committee considered her ideas for a new marketing strategy quite powerful. The best ideas that they had heard in years.
3. She spent a full month evaluating his computer-based instructional materials. Which she eventually sent to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations.

Let's look at the phrase "And made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product" in example one. It's just that: a phrase. There is no subject in this phrase, so the easiest fix is to simply delete the period and combine the two statements:

Ivana appeared at the committee meeting last week and made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product.

Let's look at example two. The phrase "the best ideas they had heard in years" is simply a phrase—there is no verb contained in the phrase. By adding "they were" to the beginning of this phrase, we have turned the fragment into an independent clause, which can now stand on its own:

The committee considered her ideas for a new marketing strategy quite powerful; they were the best ideas that they had heard in years.

What about example three? Let's look at the clause "Which she eventually sent to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations." This is a dependent clause; the word *which* signals this fact. If we change "which she eventually" to "eventually, she," we also turn the dependent clause into an independent clause.

She spent a full month evaluating his computer-based instructional materials. Eventually, she sent the evaluation to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations.

Editing Fragments that Are Missing a Subject or a Verb

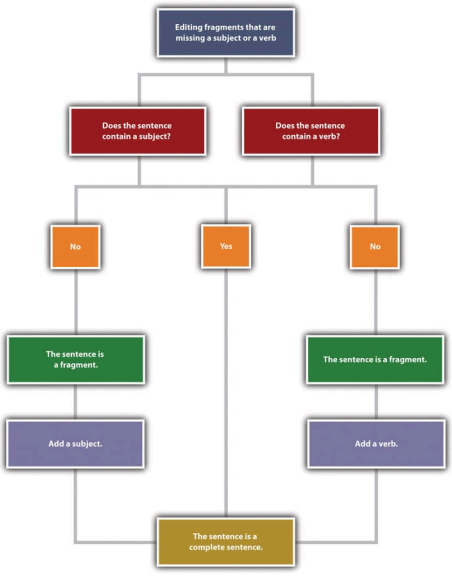

Figure: from "Guide to Writing"

Editing Fragments that Begin with a Gerund

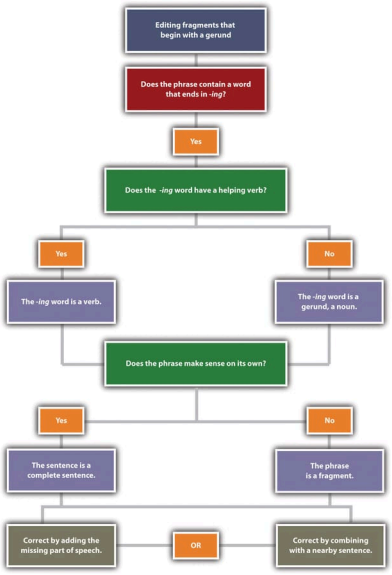

Figure: from "Guide to Writing"

Editing Fragments that Begin with a Prepositional Phrase

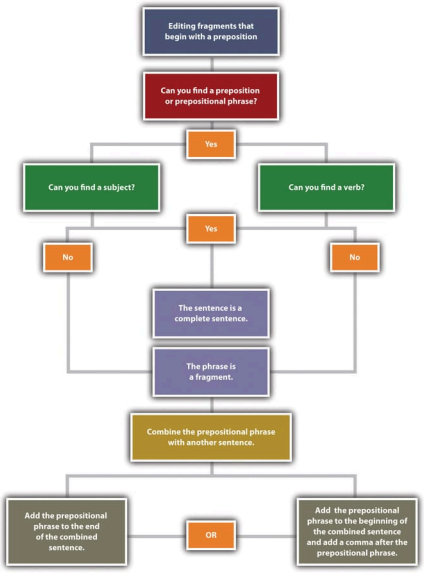

Figure: from "Guide to Writing"

Exercise 2

Identify the fragments in the sentences below. Why are they fragments? What are some possible solutions?

1. The corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software. Although, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical.
2. Include several different sections in your proposal. For example, a discussion of your personnel and their qualifications, your expectations concerning the schedule of the project, and a cost breakdown.
3. The research team has completely reorganized the workload. Making sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Correcting Sentence Fragments in Dependent Clauses

Dependent clauses, also known as subordinate clauses, contain subjects and verbs. However, unlike independent clauses, they do not express complete thoughts. They are simply parts of sentences, or fragments. Consider the following examples:

Fragment	When we arrived at the restaurant.
Explanation	Although this fragment, or dependent clause has a subject (we) and a verb (arrived), it has no meaning for the reader. It needs to be joined to an independent clause for it to make sense.
Corrected	When we arrived at the restaurant, *our friends were already waiting for us.*

Fragment	Because she was excited about the wedding.
Explanation	Like the first example, this fragment, or dependent clause contains a subject (she) and a verb (was), but it makes no sense on its own. However, we can easily correct the problem by joining the fragment, to an independent clause, as above.
Corrected	Because she was excited about the wedding, *she couldn't sleep.*

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, identify each sentence as a fragment, a run-on, or correct. Then, rewrite the paragraph by correcting the sentence fragments and run-ons.

My favorite book is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, he was born in 1894 and died in 1963 _____. Written in 1931. _____. A futuristic society where humans are born out of test tubes and kept in rigid social classes _____. This may not seem like a humorous premise for a novel, but Huxley uses satire, which is a type of humor that is used to make a serious point. _____. The humans in *Brave New World* learn through sleep teaching, Huxley calls this "hypnopedia" _____. Everyone is kept "happy" in the brave new world by taking a pill called soma, there is one character named John the Savage who does not take soma _____. Because he comes from a different part of the world where there is no technology, and he believes in natural ways of living _____. It turns out that John has a big problem with the brave new world and how people live there _____. Will he be able to survive living there, well you will have to read the novel to find out _____. *Brave New World* is considered a classic in English literature, it is one of the best novels I have ever read _____.

Answer available at the end of this section.

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Answers

Exercise 1

The first two sentences are grammatically sound. The next sentence, however, is not.

Apparently we were wizards and the law was cracking down on magic.

This sentence just needs a comma inserted before the word *and*: Apparently we were wizards**,** and the law was cracking down on magic.

Let's look at the next sentence:

So, we obviously had to go into hiding but I lost track of Jacob and then I got picked up by a cop.

This is also a run-on sentence. While *So* at the beginning of the sentence is technically fine, it's unnecessary, and many teachers dislike it as a transition word. There are three clauses in this run-on sentence, so there are a few different ways you could rework it:

- We obviously had to go into hiding**,** but I lost track of Jacob. After that, I got picked up by a cop.
- We obviously had to go into hiding. Unfortunately, I had lost track of Jacob and had gotten picked up by a cop.

Let's look at the final sentence:

But I was able to convince him that the government was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

This sentence is technically okay, but the *but* at the start of the sentence is unnecessary, and it could be removed without affecting the meaning of the sentence. Additionally, it may be helpful to clarify who *he* is:

I was able to convince the cop that the government was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

Exercise 2

Here are some possible revisions for the sentences. Remember, there are multiple solutions. Pay attention to the principles used to create the revised sentence.

In the fragment "Although, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical," the subordinating conjunction *although* is being used as an adverbial conjunction in this sentence. There are two simple revision to resolve the fragment.

- Change *although* to be an adverbial conjunction: "The corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software. However, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical."
- Move the fragment to the beginning of the sentence and link it to the independent clause with a comma after it: "Although the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical, the corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software."

The first sentence is a command; it is a correct sentence. The second sentence is a fragment, however. The simplest change is to switch the period before "for example" out for a colon. Colons can be followed by a phrase or dependent clause.

- Include several different sections in your proposal: for example, a discussion of your personnel and their qualifications, your expectations concerning the schedule of the project, and a cost breakdown.

The second sentence is a fragment. You can either change *making* to "they made" and have two sentences, or you can change *making* to "in order to make sure." *In order to* is a subordinating conjunction, so it does not require a comma beforehand:

- The research team has completely reorganized the workload. They made sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.
- The research team has completely reorganized the workload in order to make sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.

Exercise 3

My favorite book is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, he was born in 1894 and died in 1963 **run-on**. Written in 1931. **fragment**. A futuristic society where humans are born out of test tubes and kept in rigid social classes **fragment**. This may not seem like a humorous premise for a novel, but Huxley uses satire, which is a type of humor that is used to make a serious point **correct**. The humans in *Brave New World* learn through sleep teaching, Huxley calls this "hypnopedia" **run-on**. Everyone is kept "happy" in the brave new world by taking a pill called soma, there is one character named John the Savage who does not take soma **run-on**. Because he comes from a different part of the world where there is no technology, and he believes in natural ways of living **fragment**. It turns out that John has a big problem with the brave new world and how people live there **correct**. Will he be able to survive living there, well you will have to read the novel to find out **run-on**. *Brave New World* is considered a classic in English literature, it is one of the best novels I have ever read **run-on**.

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12.21: Grammatical Parallelism

Parallel Structure

What exactly is parallel structure? It's simply the practice of using the same structures or forms multiple times: making sure the parts are parallel to each other. Parallel structure can be applied to a single sentence, a paragraph, or even multiple paragraphs. Compare the two following sentences:

- Yara loves running, to swim, and biking.
- Yara loves running, swimming, and biking.

Was the second sentence easier to comprehend than the first? The second sentence uses parallelism—all three verbs are gerunds, whereas in the first sentence two are gerunds and one is an infinitive. While the first sentence is technically correct, it's easy to trip up over the mismatching items. The application of parallelism improves writing style and readability, and it makes sentences easier to process.

Compare the following examples:

- Lacking parallelism: "She likes cooking, jogging, and *to read*."
  - Parallel: "She likes cooking, jogging, and reading."
  - Parallel: "She likes to cook, jog, and read."
- Lacking parallelism: "He likes to swim and *running*."
  - Parallel: "He likes to swim and to run."
  - Parallel: "He likes swimming and running."

Once again, the examples above combine gerunds and infinitives. To make them parallel, the sentences should be rewritten with just gerunds or just infinitives. Note that the first nonparallel example, while inelegantly worded, is grammatically correct: "cooking," "jogging," and "to read" are all grammatically valid conclusions to "She likes."

- Lacking parallelism: "The dog ran across the yard, jumped over the fence, and **down the alley sprinted**."
- Grammatical but not employing parallelism: "The dog ran across the yard and jumped over the fence, and **down the alley he sprinted**."
- Parallel: "The dog ran across the yard, jumped over the fence, and **sprinted down the alley**."

The nonparallel example above is *not* grammatically correct: "down the alley sprinted" is not a grammatically valid conclusion to "The dog." The second example, which does not attempt to employ parallelism in its conclusion, is grammatically valid; "down the alley he sprinted" is an entirely separate clause.

Parallelism can also apply to names. If you're writing a research paper that includes references to several different authors, you should be consistent in your references. For example, if you talk about Jane Goodall and Henry Harlow, you should say "Goodall and Harlow," not "Jane and Harlow" or "Goodall and Henry." This is something that would carry on through your entire paper: you should use the same mode of address for every person you mention.

You can also apply parallelism across a passage:

Manuel painted eight paintings in the last week. Jennifer sculpted five statues in the last month. Zama wrote fifteen songs in the last two months.

Each of the sentences in the preceding paragraph has the same structure: Name + *-ed* verb + number of things + *in the* past time period. When using parallelism across multiple sentences, be sure that you're using it well. If you aren't careful, you can stray into being repetitive. Unfortunately, really the only way to test this is by re-reading the passage and seeing if it "feels right." While this test doesn't have any rules to it, it can often help.

Exercise 1

Do of the following sentences correctly employ parallelism? If not, revise the sentences in the text frame below.

1. Kya is really good at writing poems and making pottery. Atswei is a good singer and a good dancer.
2. Don't forget to let the dog out or to feed the cats.
3. In this paper, we will reference the works of Walton and Sir John Cockcroft.
4. Whenever he drives, Reza pays attention to what he's doing and is watching the drivers around him.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Rhetoric and Parallelism

Parallelism can also involve repeated words or repeated phrases. These uses are part of "rhetoric" (a field that focuses on persuading readers) Here are a few examples of repetition:

- "**The inherent vice** of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; **the inherent virtue** of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries." —Winston Churchill
- "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall **pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe** to assure the survival and the success of liberty." —John F. Kennedy
- "And that government **of the people, by the people, for the people**, shall not perish from the earth." —Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*

When used this way, parallelism makes your writing or speaking much stronger. These repeated phrases seem to bind the work together and make it more powerful—and more inspiring. This use of parallelism can be especially useful in writing conclusions of academic papers or in persuasive writing.

Exercise 2

Choose a well-known speech, such as Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, Winston Churchill's "Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat" speech, or Barack Obama's inaugural address. Make a copy of the speech and, individually or as a group, underline examples of parallelism. Discuss the effects of using parallelism and consider whether it is always used to achieve the same result or whether writers manipulate parallelism to create a variety of responses among their audiences.

Grammatical Parallelism

Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. Parallelism should occur on both a structural and organizational level and on a sentence level.

At a sentence level, parallel structure can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. Joining two parallel items without the same grammatical structure can be very confusing to a reader. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of coordinating conjunctions, such as "and" or "or."

Parallelism also creates a sense of rhythm and balance within a sentence. As readers, we often correct faulty parallelism—a lack of parallel structure—intuitively because an unbalanced sentence sounds awkward and poorly constructed. Sometimes, however, faulty parallelism can really make the meaning unclear. Read the following sentences aloud:

Faulty parallelism

Kelly had to iron, do the washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and to have good eyesight.

Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. Although they are factually correct, the construction is clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used. In the second and third examples, the writer begins each sentence by using a noun (*coordination*, *jeans*), but ends with a phrase (*to have good eyesight*, *wearing a suit*). Now read the same three sentences that have correct parallelism.

Correct parallelism

Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight.

Ali prefers wearing jeans to wearing a suit.

When these sentences are written using a parallel structure, they sound more aesthetically pleasing because they are balanced. Repetition of grammatical construction also minimizes the amount of work the reader has to do to decode the sentence. This enables the reader to focus on the main idea in the sentence and not on how the sentence is put together.

Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

When you connect two clauses using a coordinating conjunction (*for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*), make sure that the same grammatical structure is used on each side of the conjunction. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like **to listen to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

Correct parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like **listening to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

The first sentence uses two different verb forms (*to listen*, *talking*). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (*and*) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series:

Faulty parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits,** or **lowering workers' wages**.

Correct parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits,** or **lower workers' wages**.

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (*reduce*, *cut*) and a third item that uses a different verb form (*lowering*). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using coordinating conjunctions.

1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and to play his guitar at weekends.

2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet.
4. I have read the book, but I have not watched the movie version.
5. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer e-mail queries

Exercise 4

Answer available at the end of this section.

Creating Parallelism Using *Than* or *As*

When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure. Comparing two items without using parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being compared. Comparisons frequently use the words *than* or *as*, and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than **a pool**.

Correct parallelism: Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than **swimming in a pool**.

In the first sentence, the elements before the comparison word (*than*) are not equal to the elements after the comparison word. It appears that the writer is comparing an action (*swimming*) with a noun (*a pool*). In the second sentence, the writer uses the same grammatical construction to create a parallel structure. This clarifies that an action is being compared with another action.

To correct some instances of faulty parallelism, it may be necessary to add or delete words in a sentence.

Faulty parallelism: A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

Correct parallelism: Going for a brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

In this example, it is necessary to add the verb phrase *going for* to the sentence in order to clarify that the act of walking is being compared to the act of running.

Exercise 5

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using "than" or "as."

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.

2. How you look in the workplace is sometimes as important as your behavior.

3. The firefighter spoke more of his childhood than he talked about his job.

4. Indian cuisine is far tastier than the food of Great Britain.

5. Jim's opponent was as tall as Jim and he carried far more weight.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Creating Parallelism Using Correlative Conjunctions

A correlative conjunction is a paired conjunction that connects two equal parts of a sentence and shows the relationship between them. Common correlative conjunctions include the following:

- either...or
- not only...but also
- neither...nor
- whether...or
- rather...than
- both...and

Correlative conjunctions should follow the same grammatical structure to create a parallel sentence. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **can we take** evasive action.

Correct parallelism: We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **take** evasive action.

When using a correlative conjunction, the words, phrases, or clauses following each part should be parallel. In the first sentence, the construction of the second part of the sentence does not match the construction of the first part. In the second sentence, omitting needless words and matching verb constructions create a parallel structure. Sometimes, rearranging a sentence corrects faulty parallelism.

Faulty parallelism: It was both a long movie and poorly written.

Correct parallelism: The movie was both long and poorly written.

Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using correlative conjunctions.

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and has a racing bike.

2. The movie not only contained lots of action, but also it offered an important lesson.

3. My current job is neither exciting, nor is it meaningful.

4. Jason would rather listen to his father than taking advice from me.

5. We are neither interested in buying a vacuum cleaner, nor do we want to utilize your carpet cleaning service.

Answer available at the end of this section.

To see examples of parallelism in use, read some of the great historical speeches by rhetoricians, such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Notice how they use parallel structures (and repetition) to emphasize important points and to create a smooth, easily understandable speech. Here is a link to text, audio, video, and the music of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech, "I Have a Dream": http://www.mlkonline.net/dream.html.

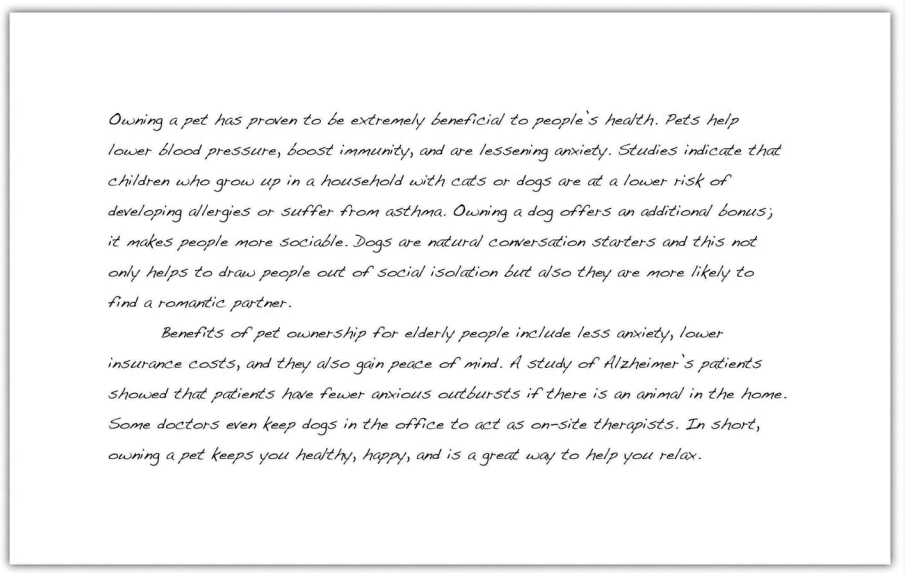
Proofreading Strategies for Parallelism

- Skim your paper, pausing at the words "and," "or," and “but.” Check on each side of these words to see whether the items joined are parallel. If not, make them parallel.
- If you have several items in a list, put them in a column to see if they are parallel.

Listen to the sound of the items in a list or the items being compared. Do you hear the same kinds of sounds? For example, is there a series of "-ing" words beginning each item? Or do your hear a repeated rhythm? If something is breaking that rhythm or repetition of sound, check to see if it needs to be made parallel.

Exercise 7

Read through the following excerpt from Alex's essay and revise any instances of faulty parallelism. Rewrite the sentences to create a parallel structure.



Owning a pet has proven to be extremely beneficial to people's health. Pets help lower blood pressure, boost immunity, and are lessening anxiety. Studies indicate that children who grow up in a household with cats or dogs are at a lower risk of developing allergies or suffer from asthma. Owning a dog offers an additional bonus; it makes people more sociable. Dogs are natural conversation starters and this not only helps to draw people out of social isolation but also they are more likely to find a romantic partner.

Benefits of pet ownership for elderly people include less anxiety, lower insurance costs, and they also gain peace of mind. A study of Alzheimer's patients showed that patients have fewer anxious outbursts if there is an animal in the home. Some doctors even keep dogs in the office to act as on-site therapists. In short, owning a pet keeps you healthy, happy, and is a great way to help you relax.

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Answers

Exercise 1

No. While the both sentences are internally parallel, they are not parallel with each other. Here are two possible revisions to improve parallelism:

- Kya is really good at writing poems and making sculptures. Atswei is really good at singing and dancing.
- Kya is a good poet and sculptor. Atswei is a good singer and a good dancer.

Yes. This sentence is parallel. The two phrases "to let the dog out" and "to feed the cats" are both infinitives. No. While the sentence is grammatically correct, it is not parallel. The two following revisions are parallel versions of this sentence:

- In this paper, we will reference the works of Dr. Ernest Walton and Sir John Cockcroft.
- In this paper, we will reference the works of Walton and Cockcroft.

No. While the sentence is grammatically correct, it is not parallel. The two following revisions are parallel versions of this sentence:

- Whenever he drives, Reza pays attention to what he's doing and watches the drivers around him.
- Whenever he drives, Reza is paying attention to what he's doing and watching the drivers around him.

Exercise 4

Using a piece of your own writing, try to identify any faulty parallelism by first highlightling any coordinating conjunctions, particularly "and," "or," and "but." Then, check to see whether the items that are joined by the coordinating conjunction are of the same grammatical type. If not, revise the sentence to correct the faulty parallelism.

Exercise 5

Exercise 6

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12.22: Standard American English Practice Exercises

Exercises

The following exercises may be especially useful for those who are English language learners or rarely speak in Standard American English.

Creating Questions

Create questions from the following sentences.

a. My daughter will have to think about her college options.

b. Otto is waiting in the car for his boyfriend.

c. The article talks about conserving energy.

d. We need to reduce our needs.

e. Natalie is always complaining about her work

Identifying Prepositional Phrases

Underline the prepositional phrase in each of the following sentences.

a. Monica told us about her trip.

b. I hope we have sunshine throughout the summer.

c. The panther climbed up the tree.

d. The little boy was standing behind his mother's legs.

e. We stayed awake until dawn.

Adjective Order

Place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the nouns.

a. eyes: black, mesmerizing

b. jacket: vintage, orange, suede

c. pineapple: ripe, yellow, sweet

d. vacation: fun, skiing

e. movie: hilarious, independent

Negative Sentences

Rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.

a. Sometimes I work on Saturdays.

b. The garden attracts butterflies and bees.

c. He breathes loudly at night.

d. He raps really well.

e. I communicate well with my partner

Correct Double Negatives

Rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the double negatives.

That morning it was so hot, Danielle felt like she couldn't hardly breathe. Ain't nothing would get her out the door into that scratching heat. Then she remembered her dog, Zeus, who started whining right then. Zeus was whining and barking so much that Danielle didn't have no choice but to get off the couch and face the day. That dog didn't do nothing but sniff around the bushes and try to stay in the shade while Danielle was sweating in the sun holding the leash. She couldn't not wait for winter to come.

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12.23: Extra Grammar Practice with Verbs

Exercises

All Things Verb

Each sentence contains an error in subject-verb agreement, irregular verb form, verb tense consistency, or consistent verb tense. Identify the type of error. Then, on your own sheet of paper, rewrite the sentence correctly.

1. Maria and Ty meets me at the community center for cooking classes on Tuesdays.

_____

2. John's ability to laugh at almost anything amaze me.

_____

3. Samantha and I were walking near the lake when the large, colorful bird appears.

_____

4. I builded my own telescope using materials I bought at the hardware store.

_____

5. My mother freezed the remaining tomatoes from her garden so that she could use them during the winter.

_____

6. Bernard asked the stranger sitting next to him for the time, and she says it was past midnight.

_____

7. My mother and brother wears glasses, but my father and sister do not.

_____

8. We held our noses as the skunk runs away.

_____

9. Neither Soren nor Andrew are excited about the early morning swim meet.

_____

10. My hands hurted at the thought of transcribing all those notes.

_____

11. The police questioned the suspect for hours but she gives them no useful information.

_____

12. Terry takes short weekend trips because her job as a therapist was very emotionally draining.

_____

13. She criticize delicately, making sure not to hurt anyone's feelings.

_____

14. Davis winded the old clock and set it atop his nightstand.

_____

15. Cherie losed four poker hands in a row before realizing that she was playing against professionals.

_____

16. Janis and Joan describes their trip to the Amazon in vivid detail.

_____

17. You should decides for yourself whether or not to reduce the amount of processed foods in your diet.

_____

18. The oil rig exploded and spills millions of gallons of oil into the ocean.

_____

19. The handsome vampire appeared out of nowhere and smiles at the smitten woman.

_____

20. The batter swinged at the ball several times but never hit it.

_____

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For Instructors

Overview

This course is designed to help meet the needs of all students in first-semester writing courses in California Community Colleges with an eye toward equitable resource availability in terms of price and quality. This is an introductory course that offers instruction in expository and argumentative writing, appropriate and effective use of language, close reading, cogent thinking, research strategies, information literacy, and documentation. With the passage of AB 705, students are directly placed into first-year college English courses to maximize the probability that they will successfully complete transfer-level English courses within a year. Students who would have ordinarily placed into Basic Skills courses a few years ago are now expected to keep up with college-ready students. The student population a first-year English course now serves is highly academically diverse, and the students have varying levels of need. Therefore, this course outline includes a plan for students who are fully college-ready with augmentation for those who need additional scaffolding and support in various areas, including language, organization, and student skills.

This chapter is a general guide for instructors who would like to use this book as a template for their first year composition course. The chapter provides a general course plan, types of essays, and general unit plans for what to assign for each "unit." These unit assignments are then cross-referenced with the text further to provide instructors guidance on what materials in the course may be especially useful for developmental or ELL students (or some combination thereof), and -- conversely -- what may not be needed for the traditional first-year composition student.

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A Course Plan for First-Year Students

Course Plan with Links

First-year college writing classes vary in the number of major assignments that institutions require under institutional course outlines. Therefore, this plan includes more "units" than some instructors or institutions may use. The units are purposefully generic so that instructors may employ academic freedom to:

- adopt readings appropriate for their student populations,
- choose topics of current interest, or
- use institutionally required readings.

Instructors are encouraged to choose open source texts (readings, videos, other media, and podcasts) to align these resources with the goal of free educational resources to promote educational equity for all types of learners.

The following table gives a general overview of possible units that generally build upon each other toward an end-of-semester research paper. The research paper assignment also assumes that students will have completed their community college library's trainings about finding and evaluating research and using database resources.

Table 14.2.1 Flexible Course Plan

	Purpose of Unit	**Major Concepts and Skills**	**Timeline***
Describing Your Reading and Writing History	This short introductory unit can be used for a writing sample, to give students practice writing descriptively, and to give instructors more information on the students' literacy histories and potential needs for course supplementation during the semester.	• Description mode • Narrative mode • Setting goals and strategies • Metacognition	**Week 1**

Rhetorical Analysis	This metacognitive assignment introduces students to the classical rhetorical elements of writing by having students use some of these elements in order to analyze their use in other people's writing.	• Understand, identify, and implement the relationship between reader/writer, audience, purpose, and form • Understand the concepts and identify the use of ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos • Understand, identify, and implement the successful use of the elements of writing (organization, support, tone, and style) • Understand and apply punctuation rules for joining clauses • Understand that reading and writing are a joint-constructive effort between audience and writer.	**Weeks 2 - 4**

Ethical Analysis of a Controversial Topic	The assignment requires students to apply various ethical approaches to analyze points of view about a controversial topic that is provided or researched.	• Understand how people's ethical frameworks shape how they approach a topic • Understand how people's ethical frameworks shape how they approach problem solving • Understand the basics of persuasion and argumentation • Understand that an essay may be organized in various ways • Understand conditional logic	Any time after the rhetorical analysis assignment, depending on instructor needs and choice.

Create an Argument	This assignment requires students to write a cogent argument that synthesizes support from at least three provided readings to develop their own point of view and effectively argue it to a neutral audience, using Toulmin argumentation.	• Identify and implement Toulmin argumentation using various classical rhetorical devices • Understand and evaluate sources created by others, including statistical sources • Identify appropriate sources and synthesize them into an argument • Understand and apply the methods for writing clear and concise sentences • Understand that reading and writing are a joint-constructive effort between audience and writer. • Understand compare-contrast and cause-effect logic.	**Any time between weeks 4 - 8**

Create a Counter-Argument with Research	This assignment requires students to persuade a potentially antagonistic audience toward the student's point of view about a controversial topic using Rogerian argumentation methods, including writing a counter-argument. Students must also use some outside resources to research the "opposition's" potential readings and find valid support for their own point of view.	• Identify and implement the Rogerian argumentation method and organization plan. • Understand and evaluate sources created by others, including statistical sources. • Identify appropriate sources and synthesize them into an argument. • Identify potential objections to the student's point of view by analyzing and demonstrating and understanding of the audience's concerns • Understand the structure of and use relative clauses • Understand that reading and writing are a joint-constructive effort between audience and writer	**Any time between weeks 6 through 12**

Re-Purposing a Message for a New Audience	This assignment requires the student to consider possible audiences, purposes, and the resultant relevant forms of writing to convey the message of a previous assignment. The product may be a document that is not necessarily intended for an academic audience.	• Identify audience, purpose, and form for a particular message • Research, evaluate and implement the typical elements of that form of communication • Understand that reading and writing are a joint-constructive effort between audience and writer • Understand the reason for rhetorical analysis in real-life writing.	**Second half of semester**

Research Paper	This assignment requires the student to identify a research question within the confines of the instructor's requirements. The student must then identify and evaluate resources through various annotation and note-taking activities. The student must learn how to organize their paper so that it addresses the research question using well-organized sub-themes. Each of these sub-themes must incorporate the sources in such a way that the student learns to "enter the academic conversation" about their topic in a discourse-appropriate manner. The student learns an extended and detailed process in which to compose higher level research papers with plenty of opportunity for metacognition through an annotated bibliography.	• Understand that research involves shaping questions and how to go through that process • Understand how to choose and evaluate sources that are at the right reading level and appropriate for the topic • Understand how annotation is part of the "glue" of the reading-writing process • Understand how to identify themes, use their reading observations to develop their ideas related to those themes, and organize them while reading • Understand the reading-writing process as it applies to research papers • Understand how to work well with sources and the purposes of citation • Understand and implement structural and grammatical parallelism	**Weeks 12 - 17**

Describing your Reading-Writing History/Intro Unit

This unit can also function as a writing sample with the dual purpose of getting to know your students better and evaluating where

they are at with their reading and writing skills. This prompt is low stakes and is not meant to be graded, but meeting with a student about it in conference is encouraged. While it is best not to give students any breakdown of the time they should spend in various phases of writing the essay, you may want to tell them when ten or fifteen minutes are left so they know that it's time to proofread their writing. The paper the writer creates can become a starting place from which you and the student can set goals and areas of focus for the semester.

Consider assigning the reading the evening before the in-class writing so that students can annotate the article. This will help you evaluate their reading skills as well. It is probably best to administer this prompt in class so that you can get an idea of the speed with which a student can process ideas relative ot the task. One hour of writing time should be sufficient to derive how well a student can integrate a text with their own thoughts and develop those integrated ideas on paper in an organized and well-written manner.

Prompt

We all have different reading, writing, and educational histories. Considering the ideas in "How Praise Became a Consolation Prize," reflect on how praise, achievement, persistence, and learning strategies have affected your educational history, specifically in the realm of reading and writing.

This essay should be at least two single-sided pages long and double spaced. Handwriting is acceptable, but be sure to write neatly. Use what you know in terms of working with sources, academic writing style and format, development, and organization when writing your essay. Be sure to give yourself time to proofread it at the end.

Unit Plan

Table 14.2.2. Describing Your Reading-Writing History Unit Plan

Topics	Readings	Activities	Supplemental Instruction Activities
This is a reading-writing sample for teachers to evaluate at the beginning of semester. The only other beginning-of-semester items that may happen at this point are listed below.	"How Praise Became a Consolation Prize" (Fry Readability Grade Level: 10)	None. This is pre-assessment.	
Create an Understanding of College Expectations	College vs. High School Assignments (1.2)	• Create classroom guidelines together • Exercise in section 1.2	
Becoming Part of a College Community	Becoming a Successful College Student (1.2)	Identify three campus groups you might join.	• Campus Scavenger Hunt • "Field Trip" to Campus Reading-Writing Tutoring Services
Understand Which Strategies Might Be Most Useful for You	Understanding Yourself as a Learner (1.3)	Learning Style Quiz	Identify reading and writing strategies that might align with your dominant learning styles

Understanding How to Manage Your Own Time	Time Management (1.4)	Exercise 1 in section 1.4	Exercise 2 in section 1.4
Creating a Supportive Classroom	Campus Support Networks (1.3.1)	Ice breaking/ community building activities	

Rhetorical Analysis

This unit is requires the student to analyze the moves writers make and how effective those moves are. Because any communication occurs within a rhetorical framework, the materials for this unit can be almost anything and, perhaps, self-selected.

Prompt

Meme, Cartoon, Commercial Analysis: 4-5 pages. You will analyze the rhetorical strategies and effectiveness of one or two Education-themed memes, an education-themed cartoon or a commercial of your choice.

Objectives:

*Show understanding of rhetorical analysis including ethos, pathos, logos, kairos, audience, purpose, tone.

*Display competence in essay writing: clear, concise thesis statements and well formed paragraphs

*Claims should be backed up with solid evidence, and should have a rationale

*Strong introductions and conclusions

Timelines:

Ethos, Pathos, Logos chart: due

Thesis and outline: due

Paragraph deadlines: due

Peer Review: due

Final Draft: due

Unit Plan

Table 14.2.3 -- Rhetorical Analysis Unit Plan

Topics	Readings	Activities	Additional Scaffolding
Reading-Writing Connection	"The Reading-Writing Connection" (3.1)	• Have students annotate the reading for particular types of annotation. • Do exercise 1 on page 3.1	Evaluate when and in what environment Ss read and retain information best.

Public Discourse and Rhetorical Analysis	"Writing as Conversation" (2.1), "Rhetorical Analysis" (2.6), and "How to Read Like a Writer" (3.10)	• In-class activity looking at different types of communications or ads -- audience, purpose, forms • Reflection about how you might approach reading after reading "How to Read like a Writer." • Exercise 1 in "Rhetorical Analysis"	Exercise 2 in "Rhetorical Analysis." Additional work emphasizing the difference between a writer's ideas and how the writer conveys the ideas in the rhetorical context.
College expectations	"The College Essay Assignment" (4.3)		
Tone and details in rhetorical analysis	"Purpose, Tone, Audience, Content in an Assignment" (4.5)	Revise wording in an ad or other communication for a different audience.	In class practice/discussion about code-switching.
Writing Process/ Essay Draft	"Writing the Essay Draft" (5.3) and "Strategies for Developing Paragraphs" (6.1)	• In-class group work on how they might organize their essay (on white board or sheets of large paper). • Metacognitive component -- students must explain why they believe the organization of their essay will be the most effective for their audience.	Identifying which details go with which writing component the student is analyzing.
Essay Writing Skills	"Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement" (5.1) Citation	Peer review of thesis statements	Work with instructor/tutor
Proofreading and Pronoun Reference	"Proofreading" (7.5) and "Pronoun Reference" (12.11)	• In class-lesson with pronoun reference once students have a rough draft. Do Exercises 1 and 2 in "Pronoun Reference". Then apply concept to their own draft. • Do proofreading backward activity in class on the day their essay is due.	• Count-non count (collective) nouns (12.9) • Word Order and Sentence Structure (12.3)

Ethical Analysis of a Controversial Topic

This essay can be with instructor or student-chosen materials although it is best if practice is done together with an instructor assigned reading. This assignment will help students think more critically about the world and its problems, give them some language to do so, and help them develop analysis in other essays.

Prompt

Essay about Ethical Controversy

For this option, you will write at least 5 full double-spaced pages minimum*, focused on XXXXXXXX ethical issue. Answer the question, "How Can We Solve the Ethical Dilemma of X?" Use each of the ethical approaches to analyze the problem and help you decide what the best solution to the issue would be. Remember to think about the various viewpoints people hold in regard to the issue and fully develop an explanation about how and why they think about it that way, incorporating evidence that demonstrates

their ethical approaches. You may use up to four sources for your essay, including our class reading. Be sure the sources they choose are credible. This essay may be organized in a couple of ways, the first being by ethical perspective, and the second being by topic (into which you would incorporate the various ethical perspectives). Remember that there isn't one simple answer to this question. **You should try to come to what you see as the best solution to the problem in the conclusion of your essay.**

*The 5 pages **do not include** your Works Cited page, which should be in the same document at the end of the essay.

Resources

Readings

"A Framework for Ethical Decision Making"

Things to remember:

- Remember to review and apply everything you learned in your first essay and apply your instructors' comments on your final paper to this essay where they might be relevant.
- Start finding any research you may need for this essay early because the opinions in that research will be the basis for your analysis. Do not just use quotes to support your point. Develop your points from what you observe in your sources.
- Decide on what factors you believe are the most important. Also decide if you believe one factor is most important.
- Organize the essay by discussing a number of sub-reasons for XXXX or by ethical approach.
- Your unified thesis should generalize but clearly connect to each individual paragraph.
- Be sure to provide a broad context for your reader in the introduction so that it introduces the problem at hand in it's historic and current context.
- All sources you use in your paper should be cited both in line (MLA style) and on the Works Cited page at the end.
- Use up to four sources for the project, and remember that you are not just arguing one point of view, but you are explaining various points of view and discussing the drawbacks and strong points of those points of view.
- All paragraphs need to have stated main ideas (topic sentences).
- Try to include strong, logic-based transitions to link your paragraphs together.
- Be sure your explanation is thorough. Don't make your reader guess the importance.
- Make sure individual body paragraphs are cohesive.

Unit Plan

Table 14.2.4 -- Ethical Analysis Unit Plan

Topics	Readings	Activities	Additional Scaffolding
Reading-Writing Connection	• "A Framework for Ethical Decision Making" (Fry Readability Level: Grade 12) • "Writing in an Age of Technology" (1.1) and "Key Takeaways" (1.5) • "Critical Reading and Rhetorical Context" (3.2) • "Reading Strategies -- Taking Notes" (3.7) • "Critical Thinking" (2.3)	• Group activity analyzing various ethical dilemmas using the framework for ethical decision-making. Make posters for class. • Class discussions of ethical dilemmas students have found themselves in. Determining whether it truly is an ethical dilemma. • Metacognitive activity about which note-taking strategy works best for them given their preferred learning styles.	• Reading Strategies (Previewing) (3.3) • Inference (3.5) • Vocabulary (3.6)

Reading-Writing Process	• "Steps in the Reading-Writing Process" (4.2) • "Topic Sentences" (5.2) • "Writing Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs" (5.4) • "Types of Support" (6.2) • "Revising and Editing" (7.1)	• Topic sentence peer review • "Alternate introductions" and the effect on the reader • Pair activity -- what support might best work with your topic sentence	Revision plan
Grammar and Style	• "Academic Style" (11.1) • "Word Choice" (11.5) • "Clause Joining and Punctuation" (12.18)	• Pair/share activity -- Highlight weak verbs and replace with strong verbs in one paragraph in class. • Metacognitive paragraph describing the change in feel of the paragraph. • Practice with clause types and punctuation in draft.	• "Questions and Negative Statements" (12.4) • "Word Form" (12.5) • "Run-on Sentences and Fragments" (12.20) • Practice exercises in punctuating coordinating conjunctions in (12.18)

Create an Argument

Prompt

Essay about XXXXXX

For this option, you will write at least 4.5 full pages minimum*, focused on XXXXXXXX. Answer the question "XXXXXXXXXx?" Try to differentiate between the various causes we've read about XXXXXXX. Use four to six sources for your essay, two of which must be from class. Be sure they are credible and of different types (see types of support) Focus on XXXXXX so that your essay will stay organized and coherent because you are writing about various reasons and their interactions. Remember that there isn't one simple answer to this question, and we've read about many perspectives. **You should argue what you think is the most important or overarching factor.**

*The 4.5 pages **do not include** your Works Cited page, which should be in the same document at the end of the essay.

Resources

Readings

Videos

Presentations

Things to remember:

- Remember XXXX from your first essay.
- Decide which articles or movies seem relevant for the essay option you have chosen.
- Decide on what factors you believe are the most important. Also decide if you believe one factor is most important.
- Organize the essay by discussing a number of sub-reasons for XXXX.
- Use the Toulmin method of argumentation for your paper.·
- Your unified thesis should generalize but clearly connect to each individual paragraph.
- Be sure to provide a broad context for your reader in the introduction so that it introduces both the concept of XXXXX and scope of XXXXX

- All sources you use in your paper should be cited both in line (MLA style) and on the Works Cited page at the end.
- Use at least four sources for the project, and try to use **at least two different sources in each body paragraph**.
- All paragraphs need to have stated main ideas (topic sentences).
- Be sure your explanation is thorough. Don't make your reader guess the importance.
- The conclusions can talk about how things could be changed in the future if you would like. Do not just repeat what you've already said.
- Make sure individual body paragraphs are cohesive.

Unit Plan

Table 14.2.5 -- Argumentation Unit Plan

Topics	Readings	Activities	Additional Scaffolding
Reading-Writing Connection	• Argument (4.4) • Reading Strategies: Questioning (3.4) • How to Say Nothing in 500 Words (7.6)	• Apply the questioning circles to the common class reading • Apply the questioning circle strategy to the readings students found in their research. • Discuss the "How to Say Nothing in 500 Words Essay" -- How do you think that may relate to the points in "The Art of Rhetoric"?	Extra practice about questioning.
Reading-Writing Process	• Revising and Editing Stage 1: The Big Picture (7.2) • Revising and Editing Stage 2: Fleshing Out Your Ideas (7.3) • Revising and Editing 3: Sentence, Words, and Format (7.4) • Strategies for Gathering Information (10.4)	• Logical fallacies activity • Identifying logical fallacies in the world around us. • Group and individual activities with practice with Toulmin argumentation both in reading and in writing their own paragraphs	• Synthesizing Sources Graphic Organizer • Work with a tutor/instructor on identifying the components of Toulmin argumentation and building their own argument. • Require some prewriting strategies or metacognitive review of prewriting strategies they've tried.
Grammar and Style	• Concession (Coordination and Subordination -- 11.7) • Sentence Focus (11.6)	• In class practice with their own concession statements • Sentence focus exercise in 11.6 in class and application to their drafts.	• Subject-verb agreement (12.13) • Articles (12.10)

Create a Rogerian Counter-Argument with Research

This assignment helps students understand the oral and written advantages of understanding and being able to explain other people's points of view. This is important both in terms of maintaining a well-functioning society and as a good persuasion technique.

Prompt

For this paper, you will argue your point of view about a self-chosen but approved topic using the Rogerian argumentation method. The paper will include at least one full paragraph of well-reasoned counter-argument to one fully developed point of view that you don't agree with. However, the counter-argument cannot constitute most of the paper. You must give fully developed and organized reasons for your own point of view as well. Imagine that the audience for this paper does not share your point of view; you must try to persuade them to change their mind. Therefore, you must follow the Rogerian method of argumentation, which shows that you understand something about their point of view. Your paper must be at least five pages plus a Works Cited page with all relevant information included. You must use at least four different and credible sources.

Things to remember:

- Be sure to include your thesis at the beginning of the conclusion. DO NOT include your thesis at the end of the introduction; otherwise, you will give away your point of view, which you don't want to do if you are trying to convince someone who doesn't agree with you.
- The viewpoint that differs from your own should appear after the introduction (body paragraph 1). Your counter-argument should appear in the next paragraph (body paragraph 2). The later body paragraphs focus on developing and supporting your point of view.
- A concession sentence needs to appear where you switch between the counter-argument and arguing your own point of view.
- Body paragraphs should be fully developed, as well as organized and focused on your individual reasons for or against your point of view.
- All sources you use in your paper should be cited both in line (MLA style) and on the Works Cited page at the end. Remember to cite even when you paraphrase.
- You must include a full counter-argument in your paper. This means using at least one full paragraph to explain another person's point of view, and then using a whole other paragraph to show why that point of view uses bad logic, bad data, or is misguided in some way.
- The introduction should move from a general statement about the topic and narrow down to the particular point of view you are going to argue against.

Notes to instructor:

Student have trouble with the organization with this paper because they are so used to giving their own opinion without considering others' first. They will need to be guided into this.

You can choose readings that you would like to focus on in the course, or you can have students practice doing research for this essay. They may need a warning to avoid pro/con websites about particular topics because they don't explain the reasoning behind the particular points of view very well.

Unit Plan

Table 14.2.6 -- Rogerian Counter-argument Unit Plan

Topics	Readings	Activities	Additional Scaffolding

Reading-Writing Connections	Summarizing (3.9) The Art of Rhetoric (2.4) Rogerian Argumentation (9.7.1) Counter-argument (9.7.3) Cause and Effect (9.5)	Class debate Summarization demonstration Act out trying to convince your parents to let you drive the car	Main Ideas and Supporting Details (3.8) Cause and effect wording and identification
Reading-Writing Process	Outlining (4.7) Evaluating and Working with Sources (10.5)	Review a sample essay	Post-outlining (review 7.1)
Grammar and Style	Relative Clauses (11.12) Sentence Variety (11.11) Grammatical Parallelism (12.21)	Review Introductions and Conclusions In-class practice with relative clauses once students have done a rough draft. Same with sentence variety	Capitalization (11.3) Spelling (12.2) Verbs and Verb Tense (12.6) Modal auxiliaries (12.7) Other Verb-Like Words and Their Functions (12.8)

Re-purposing a Message for a New Audience

Prompt

Using one of the topics and messages (thesis statements) you have previously written about this semester, choose an audience and purpose that is different. This may mean that the form, tone, organization, and amount of information will likely differ from your original piece of writing. It's even possible that most of the document may be more visual than verbal (for instance, an essay that is turned into a graphic novel for a different audience). Alternatively, you may choose a visual or written communication by someone else and re-cast it for a new audience and purpose. You will need to write a proposal for your project for your instructor to approve before beginning on your project. In addition, you will write a two-page explanation of the rhetorical choices you made when creating your new messaging. You will be graded both on the detail and depth of the explanation, the number of types of changes you identify, and the execution of those changes in your new communication piece.

Unit Plan

Table 14.2.7 -- Re-purposing Your Message Unit Plan

Topics	Activities	Additional Scaffolding

Reading-Writing Connections	Review Rhetorical Analysis (2.6) Discussions of Genre/Genre Activity Read and do exercises in Incorporating Effective Visuals into a Presentation (8.2) Read Narration, Description and Classification (9.2) in preparation for examining what needs to change from the original and describing what you did	Extra observation activities
Reading-Writing Process	Metacognitive Writing about What Student Feels They Need to Do to Improve their Writing	
Grammar and Style	Read and do exercises in Punctuation and Style (11.2). Apply to draft	Apostrophes-Possession and Contractions (12.12) Adjectives and Adverbs (12.14)

Research Paper (I-Search)

The research paper support in this e-book views a research paper as an exploration, led by the student, within very wide parameters. Thus, the process in the supporting documentation is detailed and includes many exercises.

Prompt

This is the culminating project of the semester. In this project, you will develop a central question; find appropriate secondary sources, which you will read and annotate extensively (see below); conduct primary research about your topic (optional – extra credit if documented); identify themes within all of your sources and develop your thoughts about the sources and the themes; and write an 7 – 8+ page literature review style research paper (not including the Works Cited page) about your research question. Your goal is to synthesize all the information you gather and read so that you are combining and discussing the research and building on it, all the while citing appropriately, to answer your research question.

Central Question: For your research, you will develop a central question, which is what you are trying to answer with your research. You should not know the answer to your central question before you begin your research. Your central question should begin with the word "how" or "why." Your central question must be approved by your instructor before you proceed, and you may not change the central question without approval.

Things to remember:

- Research papers are basically an extended essay – with an introduction, an extended body, and a conclusion. The body may be broken apart into different sections with headers.
- All sources you use in your paper should be cited both in line (MLA style) and on the Works Cited page at the end.
- Identify themes/topics that the various sources write about. Compare and contrast them; discuss whether you think the arguments are strong or not. Think about whether they are forgetting to consider anything. Group themes and topics together when you write about them.
- All paragraphs must have topic sentences.
- The introduction of a research paper may focus on the history of a topic, explain a current controversy, define relevant terms, and introduce any *seminal (foundational)* research that has been done on the topic that you will rely on for your research.
- Don't tell your reader what you're going to do in your essay – just DO it – in an organized way, of course.
- Conclusions of research papers generally point out what research still needs to be done, what would be the benefits of finding out the answers to the research in the future, etc.

Other important points to remember:

- Do not discuss your research process in the essay.
- You may include up to three labeled and numbered figures or tables that are no larger than one-half page.
- Be sure to follow the advice and guidelines from our previous essays here – have fully developed ideas with topic sentences and explain and support them, cite and paraphrase texts appropriately, and proofread.
- Research papers and literature reviews can be overwhelming tasks, so it's good to put yourself together a plan with deadlines to accomplish and review the strategies and requirements for previous essays, as well as the comments on previous essays.

** **IMPORTANT**: Go into your research paper with an open mind. If you must start writing before you begin your research, do it only for brainstorming and to get yourself to think about the topic. Do NOT write your research paper and then go out and hunt for research to fill in the blanks. This is not in the proper spirit of academic inquiry.**

Rather, start with your central question, develop key words for your source search, and then start reading, taking notes, summarizing, and thinking about how the various ideas you have been reading about fit together.

Unit Plan

Table 14.2.8 -- Research Paper Unit Plan

Topics	Readings	Activities	Additional Scaffolding
Reading Writing Connections	• The Purpose of Research Writing (10.1) • Developing a Research Proposal (10.3) • Reading and Note Taking for Research Papers (10.6)	• Annotated bibliography • Develop a research proposal	How to critique
Reading-Writing Process	• The Process of Writing a Research Paper (10.2) • Critical Thinking and Research Applications (10.7) • Creating a Rough Draft for a Research Paper (10.8) • Developing a Final Draft of a Research Paper (10.9)	• Do the exercises as they relate to your research paper as you read through the readings. • Checking your paraphrasing using plagiarism software	• Help student create a step-by-step plan and figure out self-rewards for meeting deadlines. • Extra practice with synthesizing
Grammar and Style	1. Appositives, Adjective Clauses, and Verbals (11.8) 2. Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers (11.10)	Do exercises in the readings about style and then practice them on the students' research paper drafts	Extra Grammar Practice with Verbs (12.23)

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Supporting Activities and Resources for ELL and Developmental Students

Supporting Activities and Resources for Developmental and ELL Students

Now that all students have the opportunity to move directly into first-year composition courses, some students may find that they need extra support to successfully complete the expectations and student learning outcomes of these courses. The following tables list particular topics and activities that we have found help our students meet learning outcomes or fill gaps that exist in their declarative or procedural knowledge. Note that some of the activities and concepts listed below may benefit both ELL and developmental students. Concepts and skills for which the majority of first-year composition students need instruction are not included here, but are embedded in the assignments on the previous page.

Supporting Activities/Concepts for Developmental Students

The following tables list hyperlinks to where you can find instructional materials for the various concepts and skills located throughout this course book. Please see the previous page to see where in the course plan such materials may be introduced in terms of scaffolding. Alternatively, you or a tutor can work with the student to create a plan to work on these skills and concepts outside of the unit framework.

Student Skills	Reading-Writing Process	Reading	Idea Development	Organization	Grammar
becoming a successful college student	writing the essay draft	inference	strategies for developing paragraphs	outlining and methods of organizing writing	subject-verb agreement
understanding yourself as a learner	paragraph types and purpose	distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details	types of support		apostrophes
	narration, description, and classification	reading strategies -- previewing			question marks
	vocabulary				coordination
	what is academic writing?				fragments
					helping verbs and modal auxiliaries
					irregular verbs
					negative statements
					plural nouns
					prepositional phrases
					extra punctuation practice
					run-on sentences

					sentence structure
					verbs and verb tense
					word choice -- synonyms and antonyms

Supporting Activities/Concepts for English Language Learners

Student Skills	Reading-Writing Process	Reading	Idea Development	Grammar
becoming a successful college student	vocabulary	inference	strategies for developing paragraphs	subject-verb agreement
		distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details	working with sources part 2	articles
				count-noncount nouns and plural nouns
				fragments
				helping verbs (modal auxiliaries)
				infinitives and irregular verbs
				negative statements
				extra punctuation practice
				question form
				word form
				verbs and verb tense

Note about relative pronoun exercise 1: This grammar topic is included for all first-year composition students. This exercise can be a good opportunity to talk about gender inclusivity, the use of "they" as a personal pronoun for two-spirit people, and looking at our unchecked biases about what genders perform certain activities and jobs.

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Open Source Readings Arranged by Theme

This list is not comprehensive, but the vast majority of public domain works are available because they are older. A few newer authors are publishing through Creative Commons, but that is not common. Thus, this list may serve best as introducing student to some classics or to compare older attitudes and thoughts on a topic to modern ones. In addition, there are a few works here than can serve as primary sources for historical research. A couple of additional searchable open source databases are listed at the bottom of this list.

Writing and Rhetoric

How to Say Nothing in 500 Words

The Poetics of Aristotle

Books and Bookmen (1886)

The Cynic's Word Book by Ambrose Bierce (1906)

Ethics, Philosophy, and Religion

A Framework for Ethical Decision Making

Walden and Civil Disobedience (Henry David Thoreau)

Siddartha (Herman Hesse)

The Prophet (Khalil Gilbran)

The Ethics of Aristotle

Meditations by Marcus Aurelius

Beyond Good and Evil by Friedrich Nietzche

The Fourth Dimension and the Bible

What is Man? and Other Essays by Mark Twain

The Future of Ideas by Lawrence Lessig (2001)

Psychology

The Art of War (Sun Tzu) -- also military (and business) strategy

My Experiences in a Lunatic Asylum (1879)

Sketches in Bedlam (1823)

Is Man a Free Agent? The Law of Suggestion (1902)

Education

How Praise Became a Consolation Prize

Economics, Politics, and Sociology

The Wealth of Nations (Adam Smith)

The Communist Manifesto (Karl Marx)

The Republic (Plato)

A Vindication of the Rights of Women (Mary Wollstonecraft)

First English Edition of Michel de Montaigne's Essays (1603)

The Federalist Papers

ProPublica articles (just attribute them)

Collective Intelligence: Creating a Prosperous World at Peace. Edited by Mark Tovey (book of essays) 2009.

A Modest Proposal by Jonathan Swift

History and Biography

Twelve Years a Slave (Solomon Northup)

Up from Slavery by Booker T. Washington

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

London's Dreadful Visitation: A Year of Weekly Death Statistics during the Great Plague (1665)

Potts's Discovery of Witches in the County of Lancaster (1845)

The American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1838

A Collection of Very Valuable and Scarce Pieces relating to the Last Plague in the Year 1665

Science

On The Origin of Species by Charles Darwin

First Paper to Link CO2 and Global Warming, by Eunice Foote (1856

The Anatomy of Drunkenness (1834) -- Great as an example of classification; written by a doctor

Other Resources

Directory of Open Access Journals

Libretexts

Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (many essays and resources)

https://www.gutenberg.org/

Internet Archive

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