ENGLISH 101: COLLEGE COMPOSITION



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English 101: College Composition-MacDougall

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This text was compiled on 06/07/2025

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Detailed Licensing

Detailed Licensing

Licensing

*A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in **Back Matter/Detailed Licensing**.*

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Critical Reading

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

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

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

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

Tip:

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

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

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

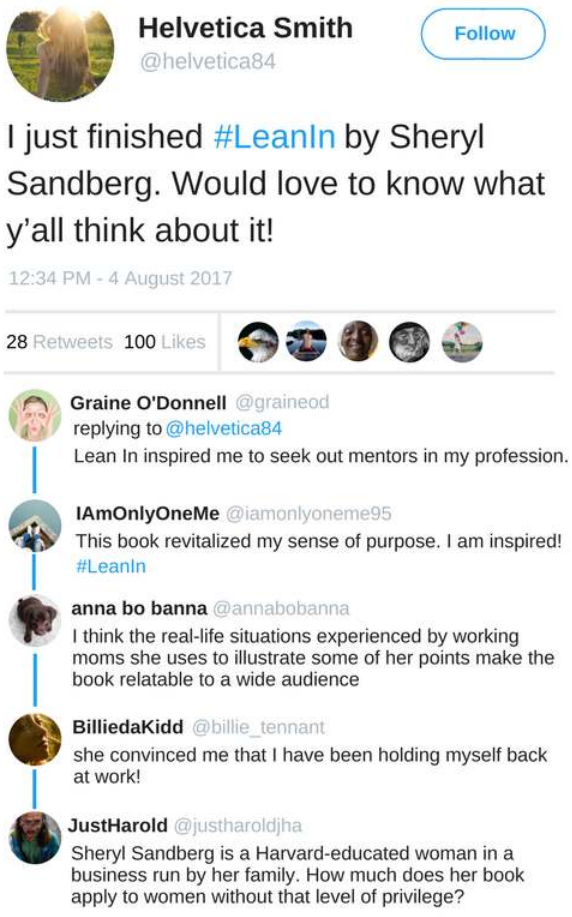


Figure 1.1.2

Finding an error in someone else's argument can be the point of destabilization you need to make a worthy argument of your own, illustrated in the final tweet from the previous image. Critical reading has many uses. If applied to a work of literature, for example,

it can become the foundation for a detailed textual analysis. With scholarly articles, critical reading can help you evaluate their potential reliability as future sources. Critical reading can even help you hone your own argumentation skills because it requires you to think carefully about which strategies are effective for making arguments, and in this age of social media and instant publication, thinking carefully about what we say is a necessity.

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1.2: How Do You Read Critically?

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

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

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

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

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

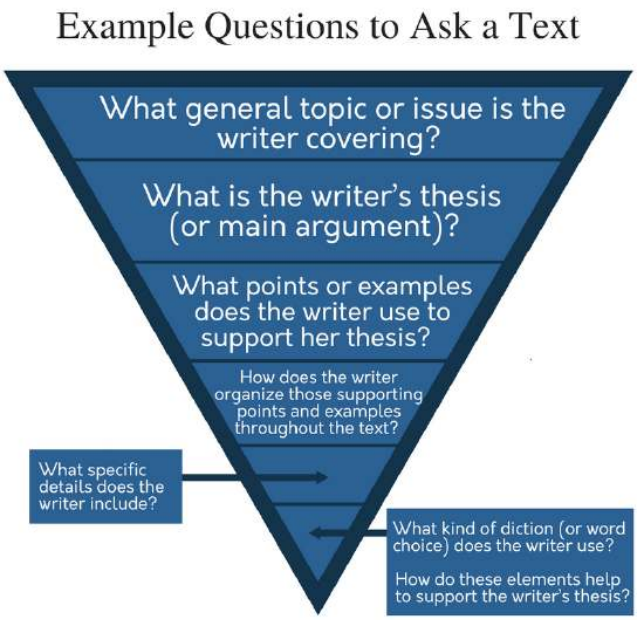


Figure 1.2.1 “Example Questions to Ask a Text”

Preparing for a Reading Assignment

You need to make a plan before you read. Planning ahead is a necessary and smart step in various situations, inside or outside of the classroom. You wouldn’t want to jump into dark water head first before knowing how deep the water is, how cold it is, or what might be living below the surface. Instead, you would want to create a strategy, formulate a plan before you made that jump. The same goes for reading.

Planning Your Reading

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

Managing Your Reading Time

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

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

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

Establishing Your Purpose

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

Purposes for Reading

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

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

Tip:

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

●Title

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

●Topic sentences of body paragraphs

●Conclusion paragraph

●Bold or italicized terms

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

Key Takeaways

- College-level reading and writing assignments differ from high school assignments not only in quantity but also in quality.
- Managing college reading assignments successfully requires you to plan and manage your time, set a purpose for reading, practice effective comprehension strategies, and use active reading strategies to deepen your understanding of the text.

- College writing assignments place greater emphasis on learning to think critically about a particular discipline and less emphasis on personal and creative writing.

Right Before You Read

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

Questions to ask when previewing may include the following:

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

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

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

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

While You Read

Improving Your Comprehension

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

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

Identifying the Main Points

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

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

Regardless of what type of expository text you are assigned to read, the primary comprehension goal is to identify the main point: the most important idea that the writer wants to communicate, often stated early on in the introduction and often re-emphasized in the conclusion. Finding the main point gives you a framework to organize the details presented in the reading and to relate the reading to concepts you learned in class or through other reading assignments. After identifying the main point, find the supporting points: the details, facts, and explanations that develop and clarify the main point.

Tip:

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

Some texts make the task of identifying the main point relatively easy. Textbooks, for instance, include the aforementioned features as well as headings and subheadings intended to make it easier for students to identify core concepts as well as the hierarchy of

concepts (working from broad ideas to more focused ideas). Graphic features, such as sidebars, diagrams, and charts, help students understand complex information and distinguish between essential and inessential points. When assigned a textbook reading, be sure to use available comprehension aids to help you identify the main points.

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

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

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

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

  Tip:

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

  How to Annotate:

  - Underline, highlight, or mark sections of the text that seem important, interesting, or confusing.
  - Be selective about which sections to mark; if you end up highlighting most of a page or even most of a paragraph, nothing will stand out, and you will have defeated the purpose of annotating.
  - Use symbols to represent your thoughts.
  - Asterisks or stars might go next to an important sentence or idea.
  - Question marks might indicate a point or section that you find confusing or questionable in some way.
  - Exclamation marks might go next to a point that you find surprising.
  - Abbreviations can represent your thoughts in the same way symbols can
  - For example, you may write "Def." or "Bkgnd" in the margins to label a section that provides definition or background info for an idea or concept.
  - Think of typical terms that you would use to summarize or describe sections or ideas in a text, and come up with abbreviations that make sense to you.
  - Write down questions that you have as you read.
  - Identify transitional phrases or words that connect ideas or sections of the text.
  - Mark words that are unfamiliar to you or keep a running list of those words in your notebook.
  - Mark key terms or main ideas in topic sentences.
  - Identify key concepts pertaining to the course discipline (i.e.–look for literary devices, such as irony, climax, or metaphor, when reading a short story in an English class).
  - Identify the thesis statement in the text (if it is explicitly stated).

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

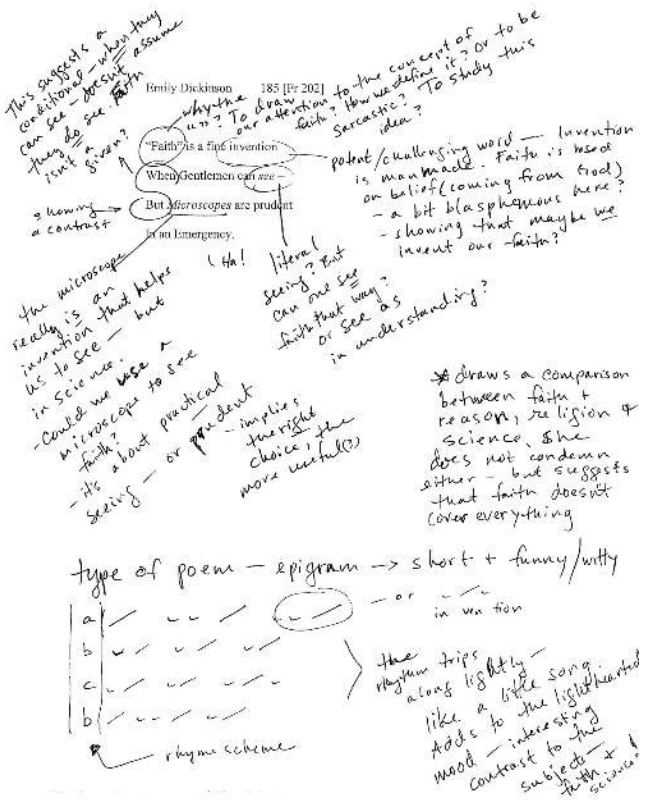


Figure 1.2.2 Sample Annotated Emily Dickinson Poem

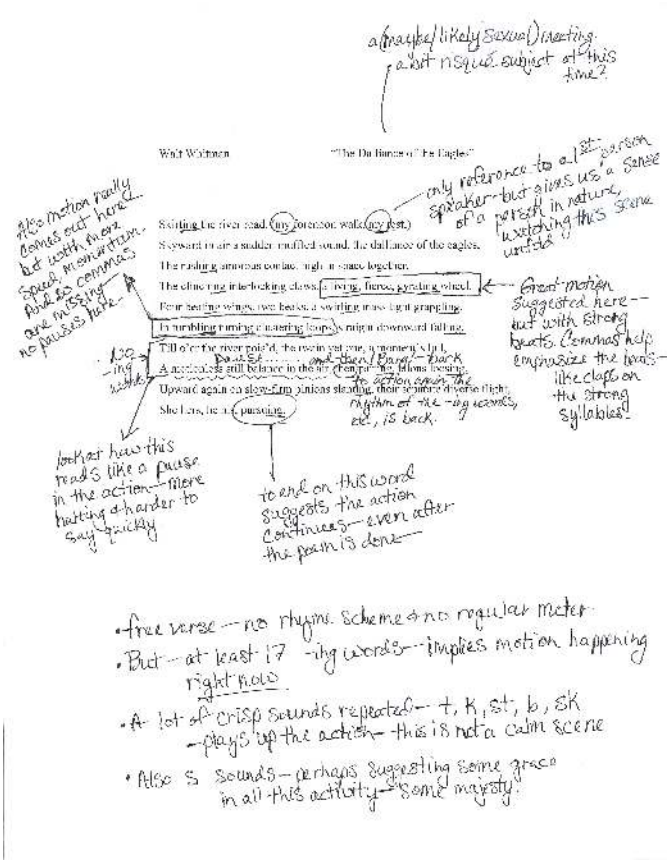


Figure 1.2.3 Sample Annotated Walt Whitman Poem "The Dalliance of the Eagles"

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

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

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

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

After You Read

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

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

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

Critical Reading Practice Exercises

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

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

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

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

Tip

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

Tip

(https://tinyurl.com/yccryaky)

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1.3: Strategies for Active Reading

Learning Objective

- Describe active reading strategies

Good writing begins with good reading. Every time you read, you're exposed to someone else's ideas and to their way of writing: their word choice, vocabulary, knowledge base, use of language, and so forth. You can become a better reader by reading every day and practicing effective reading skills.

Reading effectively means reading in a way that helps you understand, evaluate, and reflect on a written text. As you might guess, these skills are very important to college students. No matter what field you're going into, you'll be doing a lot of reading. The more effectively you read, the easier it will be, the less time it will take, and the more you'll enjoy the experience.

These tips can help make your reading more effective:

- Create an optimal setting for reading—pick the best time, place, and conditions. Create a reading environment that helps decrease distraction.
- Engage in pre-reading strategies before starting to read
- Read material efficiently: pick up a piece of material, engage actively with it, and finish.
- Annotate written texts—write directly *on* the texts and/or take notes as you read. By doing this, you can enter into a discussion with the text, interacting with it.
- Research or investigate content you don't fully understand.
- Work to discover the central meaning of the piece. Ask questions like:
  - What is the author's point?
  - What is the text trying to say?
  - What story is the author telling?
  - How does the author create and build this meaning?
- Reflect on what the text means, internalizing the meaning:
  - How am I responding to this text?
  - Why am I responding that way?
  - What does the text make me think about?
  - What does this information mean to me?



Figure 1. Although reading anywhere you can is a great idea, active reading generally requires sitting down with a pen or computer in a distraction-free environment and taking notes so that you can fully engage with the text.

Active Reading Strategies

You have already learned that college requires active reading, not passive reading. But it is hard to keep our minds focused on a task all the time. Further, it is difficult to get away from the excitement and "noise" of a college life.

Read Thoroughly and in a Distraction-Free Environment

It is a good idea to read multiple times, especially items such as prompts, texts for analysis, materials for exams, etc. Reading multiple times will enhance your ability to cognitively process the material. If you can do your reading in a distraction-free environment, that will also increase your ability to make sense of the material and to commit it to memory.

Annotate Your Texts

Readings in college are meant to marked-up. You cannot make the most of your reading experiences if you do not synthesize complex parts, write questions that arise, or note connections. And don't simply highlight parts you find interesting—highlighting certainly isn't a bad strategy, but it doesn't advance active reading in and of itself. If you are using an online text, you can use programs to take online notes, or take notes on your readings in a separate notebook.

Think of your reading experience as you would a conversation with someone, especially someone you might not know well. If all that happens is the other person talks to you while you sit passively, you may well get some information, but you would be unable to get clarification, ask questions, or think about the larger context, just for starters. Conversation works best when multiple people are active participants. Think of reading in a similar way.

Use Your Personal Knowledge to Your Advantage

Though college involves a lot of reading on subjects or topics that are new to you, your prior knowledge can still help. Try to connect readings to what you already know, even if that isn't a lot. For example, you might be reading for your Biology class and remember a relative's heart attack. What you learned as your family member went through the treatment could help you contextualize the reading. One trick to helping you retain knowledge during reading is to apply the information you read to what you already know about a topic.

Don't Bite Off More Than You Can Chew

You probably learned long ago that you can't read the 200-page text that is the basis for your book report the day before the paper is due; however, you might not have thought much about shorter readings. Remember, reading in college is more difficult than it was in high school, so even that 20-page chapter might be more work than it sounds like.

Since you will be annotating and thinking critically about the material, it might be a good idea to stop once in a while or break up even shorter pieces. Of course, you should probably be able to read a six-page article in one sitting, but you might want to go back at a later time to re-read it. You know your reading and thinking capacities better than anyone else, but don't push ahead if you find yourself not reading critically or not retaining information. This is why it is important to get to reading assignments early and leave time to come back to them if you need to do so.

The Reading-Process Loop

On the next page are strategies for a reading process loop—previewing, questioning, annotating, and reviewing—that will help you better think about and understand what you are reading. Don't forget, reading is a recursive act, which means you can move back and forth through different steps as you work. Keep reading and thinking about what you have read until you feel comfortable with the material.

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1.4: Previewing

Learning Objectives

- Use previewing as a reading strategy

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



Figure 1. Think of previewing a text as similar to watching a movie preview.

According to research, previewing a text can improve comprehension (Graves, Cooke, & LaBerge, 1983, cited in Paris et al., 1991). It can set a purpose for reading and help you prepare for what's coming.

Depending on the genre, your approach to previewing may vary:

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

How To Use It

To preview a text before you read, first ask yourself whether the text is fiction or nonfiction.

- If the text is fiction or biography, 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, look at text features and illustrations (and their captions) to determine the subject matter and to recall prior knowledge, to decide what you already know about the subject. Previewing also helps you figure out what you don't know and what you want to find out.

How to Preview

Think of previewing a text as similar to creating 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.

Scanning and Skimming

Scanning

The technique of scanning is a useful one to use if you want to get an overview of the text you are reading as a whole – its shape, the focus of each section, the topics or key issues that are dealt with, and so on. In order to scan a piece of text you might look for sub-headings or identify key words and phrases which give you clues about its focus. Another useful method is to read the first sentence or two of each paragraph in order to get the general gist of the discussion and the way that it progresses.

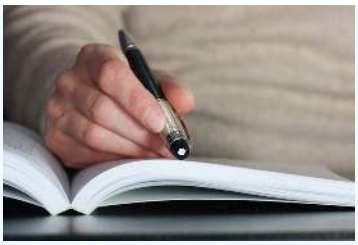


Figure 2. Identifying sub-headings and key words as you scan a particular text can help you to get an overview of the bigger ideas and themes.

Scanning is also used to find a particular piece of information. Run your eyes over the text looking for the specific piece of information you need. You may run your eyes quickly down the page in a zigzag or winding S pattern. If you are looking for a name, you note capital letters. For a date, you look for numbers. Vocabulary words may be boldfaced or italicized. When you scan for information, you read only what is needed. If you see words or phrases that you don't understand, don't worry when scanning.

Using internet tools such as a search bar or Ctrl + F can be useful when scanning.

Skimming

Skimming is used to quickly gather the most important information, or "gist" of a text. Run your eyes over the text, noting important information. Use skimming to quickly get up to speed on the basic content coverage; it's not essential to understand each word when skimming. As you skim, you could write down the main ideas and develop a chapter outline.

When you preview, you look for sign-posts by doing the following things:

- Scan for titles, headings, and subheadings
- Skim the first paragraph or introduction
- Skim the last paragraph or summary
- Scan the first sentence after each heading
- Skim the abstract (if provided)
- Make a note of graphic aids such as figures, tables, charts, graphs, and images
- Make a note of typographical aids such as bold-faced or highlighted words and phrases
- Scan any supplemental material at the beginning or end of the text, such as chapter outlines, chapter objectives, discussion questions, or vocabulary lists

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.

✔ ✔ Watch It

This video explains the advantages of previewing a text and how to do it successfully.

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1.5: Annotating

Learning Objectives

- Explain strategies for annotating texts

To annotate is to actively engage a text by pausing to reflect, mark up, and add notes as you read. It can increase comprehension, help you remember what you've read, and save you time by not requiring you to re-read as often. The simplest ways to annotate include marking up the text by highlighting, underlining, bracketing, or placing symbols in the text or the margins, but simply highlighting is insufficient. Highlighting tells you that you thought something was important in the moment you read it, but when you go back later, you won't know *why* you thought it was important. As you annotate, you'll also want to add keywords, phrases, or questions, and make connections to the content.

While annotating, look for opportunities to:

- Summarize important ideas in your own words.
- Add examples from real life, other books, TV, movies, and so forth.
- Define words that are new to you.
- Mark passages that you find confusing with question marks.
- Write questions that you might have for later discussion in class.
- Comment on the actions or development of characters.
- Comment on things that intrigue, impress, surprise, disturb, etc.
- Note how the author uses language.
- Draw a picture when a visual connection is appropriate.
- Explain the historical context or traditions/social customs used in the passage.

Watch It

Watch this video lesson to learn about the value of annotation and how to do it.

A link to an interactive elements can be found at the bottom of this page.

You can view the transcript for "Creating an Annotation System" here (opens in new window).

Try It

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Annotating a Textbook

Most textbooks are organized in similar ways, with chapters, sections, headings, visuals, and activities. Use this structure to help you break down the content in manageable chunks and to look for important concepts, facts, key terms, and theories contained within the text. Look for any sidebars and special features, and be sure to complete any practice questions or activities.

One great way to annotate a textbook is to create your own study questions based on the reading. After reviewing your notes, create study questions about important theories, facts, people, dates, and terms, then use the questions to quiz yourself.

Note-Taking strategies

There are several recommended note-taking strategies for textbook reading such as SQ3R or Cornell Notes.

SQ3R

SQ3R stands for:

- Survey
- Question
- Read
- Recite

- Review

In this method, you first survey the text by glancing over the headers and major points. Then you turn the headings or the main ideas from the summary into questions about the reading. So if a header says, “Annotating a Textbook,” you could write, “What are methods for annotating a textbook?” Next, you read to find the answer. Then you try to recite your answer out loud in your own words, without looking at your notes. Then you can continue on, but remember to review your notes when you are done with your reading.[1]

Cornell Notes

Cornell notes are often used during a lecture but can also be used while reading a text. You begin by creating two columns on your paper—draw a vertical line about 1/3 of the way across a paper. On the right-hand side, you write down notes as you listen or read. In the left-side column, you add in questions and elaborate on the things you wrote on the other side. It follows this general structure:

- Record: write down notes from the reading or lecture on the right side of the paper
- Question: write down questions or keywords on the left side of the paper that connect to the notes on the other side.
- Recite: Cover the detailed notes on the right side of the paper and ask yourself the questions from the left side, or use the keywords to see how much you can recite from the reading or notes.
- Reflect: Think deeply about the notes and try to make connections between what you already know and what you learned.
- Review: Review your notes frequently—before class, after class, before an exam, etc.[2]

Annotating a Work of Fiction

When annotating a work of fiction, such as a novel or short story, look for key elements, such as:

- Characters: The **protagonist** is the main character and the focus of the story. They may be the hero, or anti-hero, someone who is flawed but still fulfills the role of the hero. There may also be an **antagonist**, someone who is opposed to the main character.
- Setting: The setting is a place and time where the story unfolds. The setting may be current, historical, or invented.
- The Plot: Many stories follow a predictable plot formula, which involves first setting the stage, introducing a conflict that causes action leading up to a climax, then falling action and resolution.



Figure 1. Identifying the 5 stages of a plot will help you as you annotate works of fiction.

- The Point of View: The point of view is the teller of the story.



Figure 2. Recognizing which point of view is being used is another helpful tool in annotating.

- Themes: Themes are the major ideas expressed in a story. Every story has one or more themes that it develops, such as “human endeavor is ultimately futile” or “working class unity leads to successful resistance to oppression.”

Annotating an Essay or Nonfiction Book

Reading (and writing!) essays is an essential part of your college experience. Essays and books are usually organized around a central idea or argument, known as a thesis statement. And even though a book is longer with more room to develop ideas, both books and essays share a similar structure that has an introduction, body, and conclusion.

When annotating an essay or nonfiction book, first look for these things:

1. Find the stated or implied thesis statement, also referred to as the author’s central argument. A thesis consists of a specific topic and a position statement on the topic. All of the other ideas in the text support and develop the thesis, so it’s really important to

identify the thesis as you read. You'll get lots of practice identifying and writing thesis statements and topic sentences throughout this course.
2. Identify topic sentences. Topic sentences are the main ideas of a paragraph.
3. Identify key supporting details. Supporting details help develop and explain the topic sentences.
4. Identify transitional words and phrases. These can work as signposts to better help you understand the author's argument. They often highlight examples and comparisons with the main argument. Look for words like:
    - Example (e.g. for example, for instance)
    - Time or Sequence (e.g. first, second)
    - Comparison (e.g. however, on the other hand)
    - Concession (e.g. admittedly, granted)
    - Addition (e.g. furthermore, in addition)
    - Cause and Effect (e.g. as a result, consequently)
    - Conclusion (e.g. therefore, in conclusion)
    - Summary (e.g. in summary, in other words)

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1. Textbook Reading Systems. *Cornell University*. http://lsc.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Textbook-Reading-Systems.pdf↵
2. The Cornell Note-taking System. The Learning Strategies Center. Cornell University. http://lsc.cornell.edu/study-skills/...taking-system/ ↵

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1.6: Reading Scholarly Articles

Learning Objectives

- Explain how to effectively read scholarly articles

Reading Scholarly Articles

For many college assignments, you will be asked to find and read scholarly articles to support arguments in your own writing. Scholarly articles are those written by professionals in their fields of study, intended for other professionals in that field, and published in a venue that professionals in the field use. Professional articles are also often peer-reviewed articles, meaning that other scholars have reviewed the article before publication.

Journal articles generally share these common characteristics:

- Published quarterly or semi-annually in print journals or online
- Follow strict guidelines for organization, writing, and citations
- Include information organized into sections with headings
- Are long and in-depth; 10-20 pages is normal.
- May include graphs or tables but few, if any, images or advertisements.
- Include specialized or field-specific language.
- Present information objectively, without bias.
- Include reference lists and in-text citations.

Scholarly journal articles are different than conventional articles from newspapers, magazines, and websites. They often can be very challenging to read.

Journal articles follow different rules based on the subject or discipline they address. Those written for the humanities use MLA and CMS style and are structured like an essay, while other journal articles follow APA guidelines for organization, writing, and citation.

MLA and CMS

Journal articles written in MLA (Modern Language Association) or CMS (Chicago Manual of Style) are generally organized like an essay, with or without headings, and have the following sections:

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion
- Bibliography or Works Cited
- Appendices (if necessary)

These articles use MLA or CMS citation style for layout, citation, and documentation. They make and support arguments, they pay close attention to good prose and writing style, and they include cited references. These types of articles are used in English, History, Modern Languages, and Philosophy studies.

APA Style

APA Style is more commonly used in the sciences and research articles written in the fields of Education, Medicine, Natural Sciences, or Social Sciences. They focus less on prose and writing style, and more on using precise language and specialized terminology. They present studies, propose and test hypotheses, cite relevant research, and describe the results of an experiment. They are generally organized as follows:

- Abstract: Summarize the article
- Key Words
- Introduction
  - Describe the topic
  - Identify the problem
  - Provide a literature review

- Define the theoretical approach
- State the hypothesis

- Method
  - Describe the model used
  - Describe what was done
- Results
  - Share data (often with tables and figures)
  - Describe results
- Discussion (and/or Conclusion)
  - Interpret the results
  - Draw conclusions
  - Identify limitations
  - Share ideas for future areas of study
- References
- Appendices (if necessary)
- Table and/or figures (if necessary, may also be included in the body of the article)

Watch It

This video reviews each of the components of scholarly journal articles and will walk you through a few examples.

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You can view the transcript for "Annotating a Journal Article" here (opens in new window).

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1.7: Distinguishing Features of Reading Types

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate between the goals and purposes of various genres of texts

The types of reading you do in college will depend on your major and your elective options. It helps to be able to identify the type of source you're being asked to read in each class. That way, you have some expectations about why you're reading it, what you should expect to learn from it, and how to read it effectively.

Literature

Literature includes poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, and drama.

Primary goal: to entertain.

Distinguishing Features

- Artistic use of language
- Plot = action
- Characters

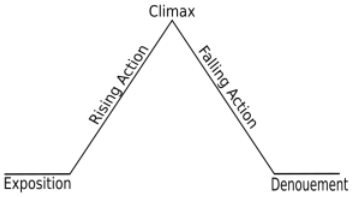


Figure 1. Many fictional stories follow a dramatic arc like this one.

Works of fiction and drama usually follow a similar plot structure, called a **dramatic arc**. "Exposition" provides the setting and background information. "Rising action" is where the events of the story start to get complicated. The "climax" is where the drama reaches its most dramatic moment. "Falling action" then shows the fallout from the climax, and "resolution" (also known as a *denoument*) is the closing action where the issues of the plot are fully resolved.

Examples

- the *Harry Potter* series of books, by J. K. Rowling
- the plays and sonnets of William Shakespeare

Journalism

Journalism is news, usually focused on current events.

Primary goal: to inform.

Because of this purpose, the writing is **neutral**: it shows no opinion, just facts.

Distinguishing Features

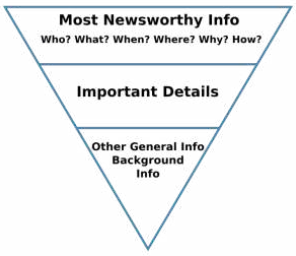


Figure 2. The Inverted Pyramid structure of news articles.

The **inverted pyramid** is a metaphor used by journalists to illustrate how many news articles are organized. Many blogs and editorials follow this structure, in addition to most newspaper pieces.

This upside-down pyramid consists of three parts. The widest part at the top represents the most substantial, interesting, and important information the writer means to convey, while the lower parts illustrate that other material should follow in order of diminishing importance.

This format is useful for two reasons. First, readers can leave the story at any point and understand it, even if they do not have all the details. Second, readers get a sense of how important different content is, depending on where it appears in the article.

Journalism relies on research. They refer to sources by name, but don't have separate citations at the end of the piece.

Examples

- articles from *The New York Times*
- stories from the evening news

Academic Journals

An **academic** or **scholarly journal** is a peer-reviewed periodical that focuses on a narrow field of study. Academic journals serve as forums for the introduction and presentation for scrutiny of new research, and the critique of existing research.

Primary goal: to distribute new ideas.

Distinguishing features

Academic journal articles are generally written by experts in a particular field. They assume that readers have a depth of knowledge about the subject matter, as well.

Textbooks

You're likely quite familiar with these already. Whether in ebook or print form, textbooks are commonly associated with formal education.

Primary goal: to educate.

Distinguishing Features

A textbook is an organized body of material useful for the formal study of a subject area. A good textbook is distinguished by:

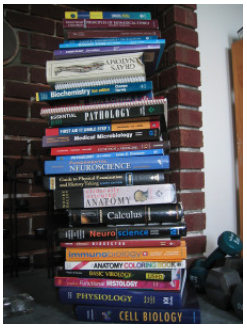


Figure 3. Several different components are included in textbooks to better help the reader.

A discrete, well-bounded scope: all the material should relate to a solid understanding of the subject, usually mixing theory and practice for each topic as it covers the subject domain.

- **Use of examples and problems**: the student should be able to better grasp each presented concept by following examples, and then applying the concept in structured exercises or problems.
- **An internally consistent style**: after the first few sections, there should be little or no surprises for the student in terms of layout and presentation of material. The text's user can get comfortable with the layout, the tempo of the presentation, and the pattern of figures, illustrations, examples, and exercises.
- **Utility for future reference**: once reviewed, the textbook should isolate material that is useful to the future application of subject knowledge in well-organized appendices and tables.

- **A structure that makes sense**: the textbook is not just a collection of useful material, it is a guide to the student for an order of review which will aid in mastering the subject area.

Reference Works

Reference works include books, such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, almanacs, and bibliographies. Reference works also include subject-specific books, like legal dictionaries and diagnostic manuals. Reference works also include websites like Wikipedia, WebMD, and the Oxford English Dictionary Online.

Primary goal: to find particular information and answer specific questions.

Distinguishing Features

Reference works usually have a direct, informative style that emphasizes facts. In addition, reference works:

- Are often arranged alphabetically, chronologically, or using some other overarching organizational method.
- Are usually written by a team of experts with authors writing on their areas of specialization.
- Are frequently updated to deliver the most current information and synthesize it with what came before.
- Often include cross-references (print) or hyperlinks (web) to connect readers to additional information in the same subject area.
- May be written in an especially terse, shorthand style to fit as much information as possible into a small space.

Examples

- The Dictionary of American Biography
- The Merck Manual
- The Oxford Dictionary of the Renaissance
- W3schools.com
- Merriam-webster.com

Now that you are familiar with these basic genres, let's take a look at a few examples and see if you can determine which reading is from which genre.

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1.8: Characteristics of Genres

Learning Objectives

- Explain differences between the characteristics of various genres of texts

Even though the previous examples all were about cars in some way, you no doubt realized they were very different in tone, style, and quality.

Let's take a closer look at each.

Example 1

"Electric and Plug-in Hybrids," by George Crabtree, came from OpenStax CNX, a textbook publisher.

The full source demonstrates some features common to textbooks:



Figure 1. A textbook source like OpenStax CNX will use very direct, factual language to educate readers.

- clearly stated learning outcomes for each section
- formal tone
- direct language
- definitions of key terms
- no in-text citations, though references may be included at the end of a chapter
- images to help illustrate the topic

A textbook's primary goal is **to educate** readers.

Example 2

"Will the Tesla Model 3 recharge the U.S. electric vehicle market?" by David Keith, came from *The Conversation*, an online news source.

The full article demonstrates some features common to journalism:



Figure 2. News sources do their best to inform readers with facts and images.

- most important information appears near the opening of the article
- reports facts
- quotes and interviews from experts on the topic
- no in-text citations, no citations at the end
- embedded links to related sources
- images to help illustrate the topic

A news article's primary goal is **to inform** readers.

Example 3

"Cannibalism in the Cars," by Mark Twain, came from a collection of his short stories, *Sketches New and Old*.

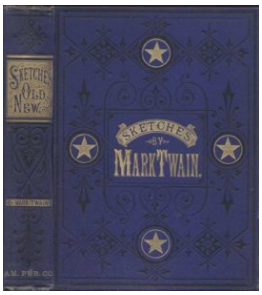


Figure 3. Mark Twain wrote this short story with the intent to entertain.

The full story demonstrates some features common to literature:

- introduces characters
- follows a narrative sequence of events, revealing a plot
- includes description to set scene
- may use first-person, second-person, or third-person voice
- uses dialogue to convey what characters say to one another
- no in-text citations, no citations at the end

A work of literature's primary goal is **to entertain** readers.

Example 4

"Hybrid vehicle" came from *Wikipedia*, the well-known online encyclopedia.

The full story demonstrates some features common to reference material:



Figure 4. Wikipedia is a popular reference-based website.

- highly structured and organized text, using headings and sub-headings
- factual content
- includes in-text citation (or footnotes) and a list of references at the end
- embedded links to related sources
- historical information
- images to help illustrate the topic
- formal tone
- clear and easy to read

A reference work's primary goal is **to inform** readers.

Example 5

"The Influence of Intersections on Fuel Consumption in Urban Arterial Road Traffic: A Single Vehicle Test in Harbin, China," by Lina Wu, Yusheng Ci, Jiangwei Chu, and Hongsheng Zhang, came from *PLoS One*, an online academic journal.

The full article demonstrates some features common to academic journal content:



Figure 5. An academic uses a highly structured format to present new information to readers.

- highly structured and organized text, using headings and sub-headings

- describes an experiment or an analysis, including the authors' findings and interpretations
- includes in-text citation (or footnotes) and a list of References at the end
- advanced vocabulary, specific to the field of study
- images to help illustrate the topic

An academic journal article's primary goal is **to distribute new ideas** to readers.

? ? Try It

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1.9: Summarizing and Paraphrasing

Learning Objectives

- Summarize a passage of reading
- Paraphrase a passage of reading

Have you ever heard, “the best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else”?

Writing a summary of a source is a very similar process to teaching someone the content—but in this case, the student you’re teaching is yourself.

Summarizing, or condensing someone else’s ideas and putting it into your own shortened form, allows you to be sure that you’ve accurately captured the main idea of the text you’re reading. When reading, summarizing is helpful for checking your understanding of a longer text and remembering the author’s main ideas. When writing, summarizing is critical when reviewing, writing an abstract, preparing notes for a study guide, creating an annotated bibliography, answering essay questions, recording results of an experiment, describing the plot of a fictional work or film, or writing a research paper.

How to Write Summary Statements

Use these processes to help you write summary statements:

- Underline important information and write keywords in the margin.
- Record ideas using a two-column note-taking system. Record questions you have about the text concepts in the left column and answers you find in the reading in the right column.
- Identify how concepts relate to what you already know.
- Add examples and details

For retaining key ideas as you read, write a summary statement at the end of each paragraph or section. For capturing the major ideas of the entire work, write a summary paragraph (or more) that describes the entire text.

Tips for Summary

For longer, overall summary projects that capture an entire reading, consider these guidelines for writing a summary:

- **A summary should contain the main thesis or standpoint of the text, restated in your own words.** (To do this, first find the thesis statement in the original text.)
- **A summary is written in your own words.** It contains few or no quotes.
- **A summary is always shorter than the original text, often about 1/3 as long as the original.** It is the ultimate fat-free writing. An article or paper may be summarized in a few sentences or a couple of paragraphs. A book may be summarized in an article or a short paper. A very large book may be summarized in a smaller book.
- **A summary should contain all the major points of the original text**, and should ignore most of the fine details, examples, illustrations or explanations.
- **The backbone of any summary is formed by crucial details** (key names, dates, events, words and numbers). A summary must never rely on vague generalities.
- If you quote anything from the original text, even an unusual word or a catchy phrase, **you need to put whatever you quote in quotation marks (” “).**
- **A summary must contain only the ideas of the original text.** Do not insert any of your own opinions, interpretations, deductions or comments into a summary.

Watch It

Watch this video to see a walk-through explanation on how to summarize.

A link to an interactive elements can be found at the bottom of this page.

You can view the transcript for “Summarizing” here (opens in new window).

Try It

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Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is the act of putting an author's ideas into your own words. When reading, paraphrasing is helpful for checking your understanding of what you read as well as remembering what you read. When writing, paraphrasing is an important skill to have when constructing a research paper and incorporating the ideas of others alongside your own.

WAtch IT

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Glossary

paraphrasing: rewriting a passage of text in your own words

summarizing: condensing someone else's ideas and putting it into your own shortened form

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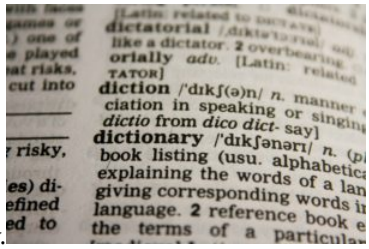
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1.10: Introduction to Vocabulary-Building Reading Strategies

What you'll learn to do: use context clues and other reading strategies to learn and retain new words

The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use the words. – Philip K. Dick

One of the key distinctions between college-level reading and reading you have done for school before is the much wider breadth and broader scope of college reading. Being well-read helps you become a better critical thinker in the long run. In this section, you'll learn some specific strategies for helping you build your vocabulary.



You've probably taken hundreds of vocabulary quizzes and tests before coming to college. Well, put your mind at ease: we aren't going to ask you to memorize lists of SAT words. This section focuses on how you can approach reading tasks methodically to expand your vocabulary along the way. It goes without saying that the more you read, the more words you will learn. However, in addition to just upping your reading load, context clues and word parts can help you build your vocabulary.

Finally, you will learn the best methods for dealing with specialized or technical vocabulary. In college, you'll probably take classes about topics and concepts you don't know anything about yet. Reading rhetorically (and strategically) can help ensure that you get the most out of those courses.

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1.11: Using Context Clues

Learning Objective

- Identify strategies for using context clues to define words

A **context clue** is a word or phrase in the same sentence or a nearby sentence that can help the reader decipher the meaning of an unfamiliar word.

Context clues consist of all the words and phrases that are near a word. Often, you can define words based on the other words around them. If you're reading a lot of material, you don't have time to look up individual words. Reading words in context helps ensure a high level of focus, whereas breaking your concentration to look up words is distracting.

What is Jabberwocky?

You may be familiar with the poem "Jabberwocky," by Lewis Carroll, written in 1871. Take a look at it here. As you read, or listen to the audio version, consider: how do you know what it means?

"**Jabberwocky**"

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! and through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

A link to an interactive elements can be found at the bottom of this page.

You can view the transcript for "Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll- Read by Benedict Cumberbatch" here (opens in new window).

Let's we share the experience with Alice (of *Alice in Wonderland* fame) after she reads it:

"It seems very pretty," she said when she had finished it, "but it's rather hard to understand!" (You see she didn't like to confess, even to herself, that she couldn't make it out at all.) "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't exactly know what they are! However, somebody killed something: that's clear, at any rate."

Even though Lewis Carroll invented many of the words of the poem, we still are able to get a clear sense of the action and adventure in it. There are enough clues around the words, and in the words themselves, for us to envision meaning.

Approaching any new set of vocabulary can be something like reading "Jabberwocky" for the first time. By using context clues, analyzing the structure of the word, and breaking out the trusty dictionary, you'll soon be master of a whole new range of thoughts —and the words appropriate to express them.

Take a look at the following hotspot activity. You probably already know these three words, but pay attention to how they function in the passage. If you were to come across a much more difficult reading passage, you could use the same method to define unfamiliar words.

? ? Learn by doing

A link to an interactive elements can be found at the bottom of this page.

Context clues can be broken down into six different types, described below. This classification is only one method of thinking about context clues.

Type	Explanation	Example
Definition Clue	A definition clue is a word or phrase that defines the unfamiliar word. Look for words or phrases that introduce a definition for the unfamiliar word, such as is defined as, means, and refers to. Also, look for punctuation marks that set off a definition, such as quotation marks, parentheses, and brackets.	Telepathy is defined as the ability to communicate information to another person without the use of any known senses or communication devices.
Synonym Clue	A synonym clue is a word or phrase that has a similar meaning to the unfamiliar word. Look for words or phrases that introduce a synonym, such as in other words, or, that is to say, and also known as. Also, look for punctuation marks that set off a synonym, such as commas, parentheses, dashes, and brackets.	The cheerleader appeared vapid— spiritless —as he delivered his pitiful performance in front of the stands.
Contrast/Antonym Clue	A contrast clue is a word or phrase that has the opposite meaning of the unfamiliar word. In other words, it's an antonym. Look for words or phrases that introduce a contrast, such as however, but, instead of, on the other hand, on the contrary, whereas, in contrast, unlike, although, and even though.	Lions are solitary creatures that prefer to hunt alone, but hyenas are gregarious creatures that hunt in packs.

Type	Explanation	Example
Example Clue	An example clue is a word or phrase that provides an example to illustrate the unfamiliar word. Look for words or phrases that introduce examples, such as for example, for instance, to illustrate, like, and such as.	The manager disliked obsequious behavior, such as fawning and kowtowing.
Experience Clue	An experience clue draws upon personal experience or background knowledge to help you infer the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Look for a word, phrase, or sentence that includes a familiar experience or information you already know.	Television audiences are familiar with disingenuous ads that make grand promises.
Adjacent Clue	An adjacent clue is a word or phrase in a nearby sentence that explains the meaning of the unfamiliar word.	Nanotechnology is becoming more widespread in society. As computer chips continue to shrink, manufacturers are placing them in everything from clothing, to building materials, to even the human body.

Let's look at a few more examples:

1. **Definition Clue**
   - The author directly defines the new word within the sentence. This strategy is commonly used in textbook material.
   - e.g. "When people contravene – break or violate – a law in Canada, they can expect to face legal consequences."
   - *Explanation:* "Break or violate" is the definition of the word "contravene".
2. **Synonym Clue**
   - The author uses a word or phrase with a similar meaning to suggest the meaning of the new word.
   - e.g. "Following his death by accidental drug overdose, actor Heath Ledger posthumously received an Oscar for best supporting actor for his portrayal of The Joker in The Dark Knight."
   - *Explanation:* "Following his death" has a similar meaning to the word "posthumously."
3. **Antonym Clue**
   - The author uses a word or phrase with an opposite meaning to suggest the meaning of the new word.
   - e.g. "I really don't appreciate your duplicity. I expect you to give me an honest response from now on."
   - *Explanation:* "Honest response" has the opposite meaning of "duplicity" since the speaker expects a different behavior from the other person from that point on.
4. **Example Clue**
   - The author provides examples or illustrations of the new word to suggest its meaning.
   - e.g. "Bats, owls, raccoons, and crickets are chiefly nocturnal creatures."
   - *Explanation:* "Bats, owls, raccoons, and crickets" are examples of "nocturnal creatures" (creatures of the night).
5. **Experience or General Inference Clue**
   - The author provides enough information in a sentence that the word's meaning can be inferred.
   - e.g. "It would be an egregious mistake to wear a dirty t-shirt and shabby blue jeans to a funeral."
   - *Explanation:* Although "egregious" is not specifically defined, most people would infer that it is inappropriate or offensive to wear worn-out clothing at a funeral.

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link to Learning

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

Glossary

context clue: a word or phrase surrounding an unfamiliar word that can help the reader decipher its meaning

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1.12: Learning New Vocabulary

Learning Objective

- Describe strategies for enhancing your vocabulary



Figure 1. If you encounter unfamiliar words, look them up, use them, and make learning new vocabulary a part of your normal reading habits.

There are several proven benefits from improving your vocabulary, but how should we go about learning new words in the most effective way? By using the following vocabulary-building strategies, you are guaranteed to develop a strong vocabulary and keep improving it every day.

Read Voraciously

It's undeniable that reading is the most effective way to get new vocabulary. When you read, you see words being used in context—and that's what makes it much more effective than, for example, merely memorizing word lists.

With context information surrounding each new word, there's a good chance you can guess its meaning just by understanding the overall text. Finding out the meaning of words in such a way is the natural way of learning language–and reading provides the best opportunity to get exposed to this natural way of learning.

If you're not able to infer the meaning of new words when reading, it's probably because there are too many unknown words in the text. In that case, try reading easier materials. The key to good reading is making it a pleasurable activity. Don't be afraid of coming across unknown words, but make sure the text is appropriate for your reading level.

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Make Friends with the Dictionary

A dictionary is the first indispensable resource to improve your vocabulary. It's only by looking up a word in a dictionary that you will learn its precise meaning, spelling, alternate definitions, as well as additional useful information about it. A thesaurus is also a valuable resource for learning by finding connections between words, such as their synonyms and antonyms.

Consider adding a good dictionary and thesaurus to your bookshelf. Here are some recommendations:

- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary
- The New Oxford American Dictionary
- The Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus

For online dictionaries, there are many free options with great extra features. Even if you have a good dictionary in print already, you can't miss having a good online dictionary at your disposal:

- OneLook: has a reverse lookup function (get the word from its definition) and works as a "meta-dictionary," showing you definitions from other major online dictionaries.
- Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary: a well-established and well-regarded name in the realm of dictionaries.
- VisuWords: a dictionary that shows words as a mind-map
- Ninjawords: searches the free dictionary Wiktionary. What makes this site interesting is that you can look up multiple words simultaneously. Moreover, the results pages can be bookmarked, making them good personal reference pages.
- Thinkmap Visual Thesaurus: if you're a fan of mind mapping, you will certainly enjoy viewing related words represented in a visual map format.

Answers.com, Dictionary.com, The Free Dictionary, and many others: all of them are good resources—try each one at least once to help you make up your mind.

? ? tech tip

Most modern Web browsers make it really easy to define a word without even going to a dictionary to search for the word.

Here are some extensions and methods for you to try out:

Chrome: Google Dictionary

Firefox: Oxford Dictionary Pop-Up

Microsoft Edge: Right-click the word and click "Ask Cortana." A search panel will slide in showing the definition.

Apple Safari: Right-click the word and select the "Look Up" option. MacOS will look up the word in its own built in dictionary.

There are many other ways to use your Web browser to build your vocabulary. Spend some time searching the Web to find the tools that work best for you.

Use It or Lose It

Don't settle after you learn a new word by reading it or looking it up in the dictionary: these are good starts, but it's by **using the new words** that you truly commit them to your long-term memory.

Be creative and try to use your newly learned words in as many ways as possible:

- Write them down.
- Say them aloud.
- Create sentences with them, mentally or in writing.
- Try to use them in a conversation.
- Discuss them with friends.

It's also important to be aware of your own language style: every time you catch yourself using common or nonspecific words such as "nice," try coming up with richer and more precise expressions instead.

Learn One New Word a Day

If you learn just one new word every day, you'll soon notice they add up pretty quickly.

Many websites provide free word-of-the-day services. Here are some to try:

- Merriam-Webster's Online Word of the Day: delivers the most useful words of all. It's also the most feature-rich: it provides audio explanation, pronunciation, and word history.
- WordSmart Wordcast: provides difficulty level, comprehensive details, and audio pronunciation for the word.
- Dictionary Word of the Day: another fine service, perhaps not as complete as Merriam-Webster's or WordSmart, but still worth checking out.

Vary Your Interests

Do something different from your daily routine: hunting, fishing, or blogging—any activity that isn't part of your normal life—can become a great way to learn new words, as every niche has its own jargon and unique ways of communicating. Read books and

magazines that are different from the ones you're used to. Watch foreign-language movies. Take up new hobbies; hang out with different people.

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1.13: Enhancing Your Vocabulary

Learning Objective

- Describe strategies for enhancing your vocabulary
- Use structural analysis to understand the meanings of words

Learn Common Roots and Word Etymology

Modern English represents a cornucopia of different languages. In fact, if you limited yourself to words with only specifically "English" origin, you would have a pretty small vocabulary.

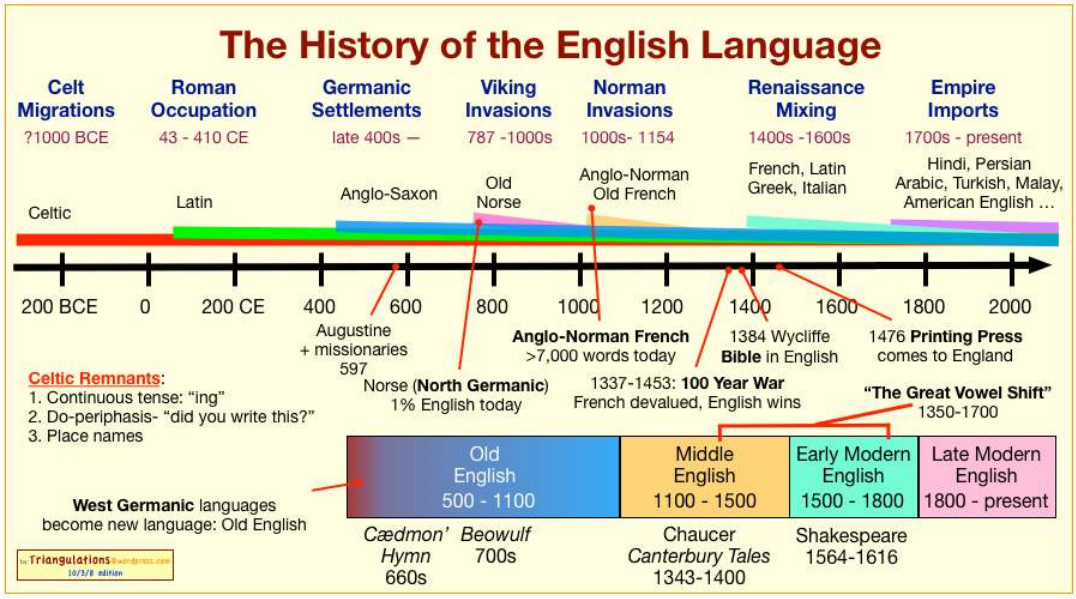


Figure 1. This timeline shows that the English language as we know it today evolved over hundreds and thousands of years.

If you learn basic root words, especially Latin and Greek roots, you will be able to break apart words to figure out what they mean. Take a look at this List of Greek and Latin roots in English. You might be surprised.

? ? learn by doing: explore latin roots

A link to an interactive elements can be found at the bottom of this page.

Understand Structural Analysis

Structural analysis is the process of breaking words down into their basic parts to determine word meaning. Structural analysis is a powerful vocabulary tool since knowledge of a few word parts can give you clues to the meanings of a large number of words. Although the meaning suggested by the word parts may not be exact, this process can often help you understand the word well enough that you can continue reading without significant interruption.

When using structural analysis, the reader breaks words down into their basic parts:

- **Prefixes** – word parts located at the beginning of a word to change meaning
- **Roots** – the basic meaningful part of a word



- **Suffixes** – word parts attached to the end of a word; suffixes often alter the part of speech of the word

For example, the word bicyclist can be broken down as follows:

- bi – prefix meaning two
- cycle – root meaning wheel
- ist – a noun suffix meaning ‘a person who’

Therefore, structural analysis suggests that a bicyclist is a person on two wheels—a meaning which is close to the word’s formal definition.

Just to pick an example, when you understand that the prefix “ortho” means straight or right, you start to find connections between seemingly unrelated words, such as orthodontist (a specialist who straightens teeth) and orthography (the correct, or straight, way of writing).

Understanding the logic behind words always pays off in terms of learning and recalling. Consider these examples: “breakfast” means “interrupt the night’s fast,” and “rainbow” means “bow or arc caused by rain.” While these meanings may be trivial to native English speakers, having such insights about words, foreign or otherwise, never fails to deepen your connection to them.

Consider the word part –cide. Though it cannot stand as a word by itself, it does have meaning: *to kill*. Think about the many words in our language that include the word part –cide. Knowing this one word part gives us knowledge about many words.

? ? Infixes

In English, there are really only suffixes and prefixes (part of a larger class called affixes). Other languages have things called infixes. They go *in* the middles of the word. *Piano, pianissimo, pianississimo,* etc.

English only has one infix:

- “abso-friggin-lutely”
- “get it to-freaking-gether”

✓ ✓ Put It to Work

To further develop this skill, refer to the convenient reference sheet Structural Analysis: Common Word Parts, for a list of some common prefixes, roots, and suffixes along with their meanings and examples of words that use them.

To practice this skill, try the Structural Analysis Exercises from Lethbridge College.

Although structural analysis is a technique that can be used by anyone, there are definitely certain disciplines that use it more extensively. The medical field, in particular, uses terminology grounded firmly in structural analysis. Check out the following sites to learn some common word parts found in the medical field:

- Building Medical Terms: The Digestive System – This site helps you build and learn terms related to the digestive system.
- Medical Terminology from SweetHaven Publishing Services
- Medical Terminology Systems, Sixth Edition Audio Exercises – This site helps you learn a variety of word parts related to medical terminology.
- Medword Resources Medical Terminology Basics – This site contains lists of medical prefixes, suffixes, combining forms, crossword puzzles, and more.
- Medical Terminology at Sheppard Software

Maintain a Personal Lexicon

By keeping a personalized list of learned words, you’ll have a handy reference you can use to review these words later. It’s very likely you’ll want to go back and refresh your memory on recent words, so keeping them in your own list is much more efficient than going back to the dictionary every time.

Even if you never refer back to your lexicon again, writing words down at least once will greatly enhance your ability to commit them to your permanent memory. Another excellent learning aid is to write an original sentence containing the word — and using your lexicon to do that is a great way of enforcing this habit. You can also add many other details as you see fit, such as the date you first came across the word or maybe a sequential number to help you reach some word quota you define.

There are many ways you can keep your personal word list; each has its own advantages and disadvantages, so make sure to pick the format that works best for you. You may prefer to keep it as a simple text file in the computer, or in a regular paper notebook, or maybe as flash cards in a shoe box.

One option is a computer spreadsheet for its handy features such as searching, sorting, and filtering.

✔ ✔ Watch It

It's one thing to expose yourself to new words—it's another to internalize these new words and make them part of your working vocabulary.

Enjoy the public service video shared below, originally filmed in 1948. Feel free to laugh at its more artificial elements.

//plugin.3playmedia.com/show?mf=1291626&p3sdk_version=1.10.1&p=20361&pt=375&video_id=AR5pnxui13E&video_target=tpm-plugin-znwmonse-AR5pnxui13E

You can view the transcript for "Build Your Vocabulary- 1948" here (download).

Though dated, this video does offer good advice for how to develop a stronger working vocabulary. How would you update these tips to the twenty-first century?

Follow a Process

To make vocabulary improvement a permanent habit in your everyday life, you should make it as habitual, automatic, and tightly integrated into your daily workflow as possible—otherwise you won't do it when your days get too busy.

In that regard, one particularly useful concept is the one of maintaining a "Word Inbox." By having a predefined place you use to capture the words you come across, you can process them much more efficiently.

Your process can be as simple as you wish—the key is to specify it beforehand and then follow it. By knowing exactly how and how often to process your inbox, you stay on top of your vocabulary improvement process, even when there are other pressing matters crying out for your attention.

Leverage Every Resource You Can

The internet is a gold mine of resources for vocabulary building. Here are a few to get you started, though many more exist:

There are plenty of vocabulary applications you can try. There are many vocabulary-related books you can explore. There is a wealth of free literature on sites such as Project Gutenberg. If you use the Firefox browser, there are many ways to integrate dictionary lookup functions, such as the plug-ins Answers.com and DictionarySearch. You can find specialized vocabulary lists, such as these feeling words or descriptive words. You can even learn some classy, Shakespearean insults!

The point is that you're only limited by your willingness to learn: let curiosity be your guide and you will never run out of resources to learn from.

? ? Try It

https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...sessments/5602

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: The Writing Process

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

2.1: What is the Writing Process?
2.2: What is Prewriting?
2.3: Prewriting Techniques
2.4: Thesis Statements
2.5: Planning the Organization
2.6: Methods of Organizing Your Writing
2.7: Writing Paragraphs
2.8: Outlining
2.9: Drafting
2.10: Revising and Editing
2.11: Transitions
2.12: Revising
2.13: Word Choice and Style
2.14: Editing

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2.1: What is the Writing Process?

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

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

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

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

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

Publishing – Sharing the final draft with others.

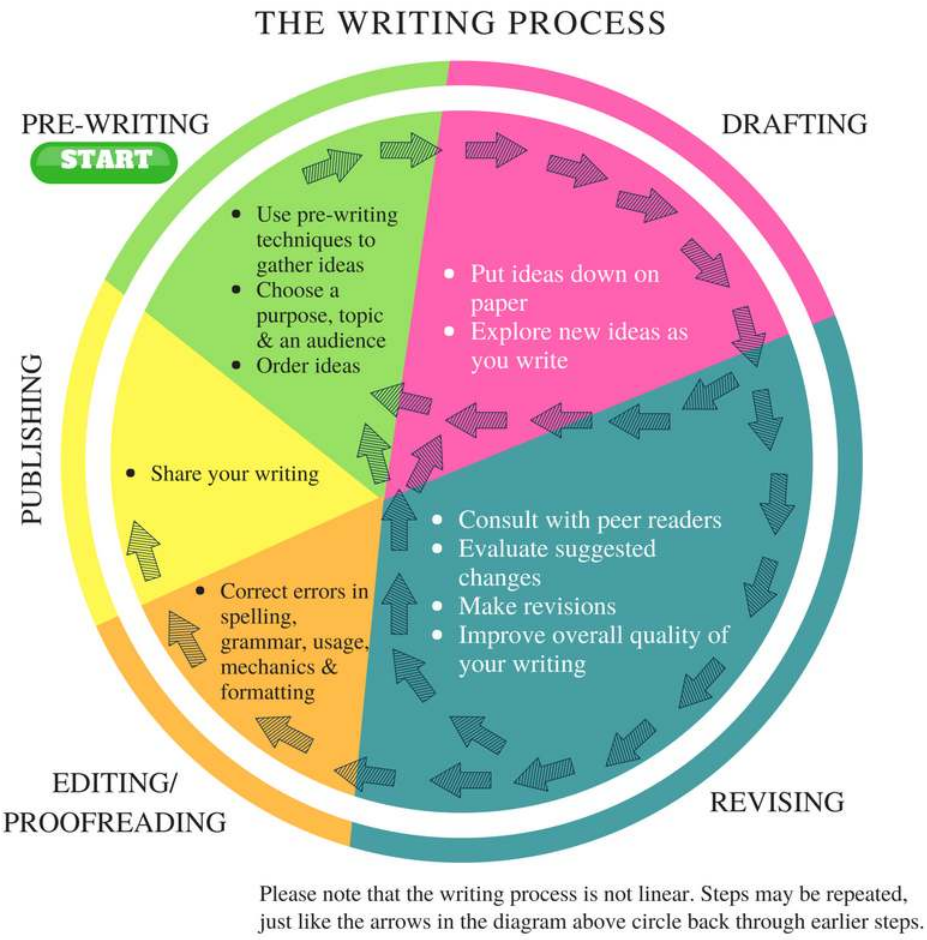


Figure 2.1.1 The Writing Process

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

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2.2: What is Prewriting?

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

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

Thinking

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

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

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

Reading

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

Tip

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

Topic Choice

Choosing a viable general topic for an assignment is an essential step. Sometimes your instructor will give you an idea to begin an assignment, and other times your instructor will ask you to come up with a topic on your own. A captivating topic covers what an

assignment will be about and fits the assignment's purpose and its audience. There are various methods you may use to discover an appropriate topic for your writing.

Focusing Topic

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

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

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

Developing a Topic

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

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

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2.3: Prewriting Techniques

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

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

Prewriting Techniques

Prewriting techniques are used to:

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

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

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

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

Freewriting

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

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

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

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

Example 2.3.1: freewriting

Last semester my favorite class was about mass media. We got to study radio and television. People say we watch too much television, and even though I try not to, I end up watching a few reality shows just to relax. Everyone has to relax! It's too hard to relax when something like the news (my husband watches all the time) is on because it's too scary now. Too much bad news,

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

? Exercise 1

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

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

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

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

- Brainstorming/Listing
- Clustering/Idea Mapping

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

Brainstorming/Listing

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

Mass Media

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

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

Idea Mapping

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

To create an idea map:

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

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

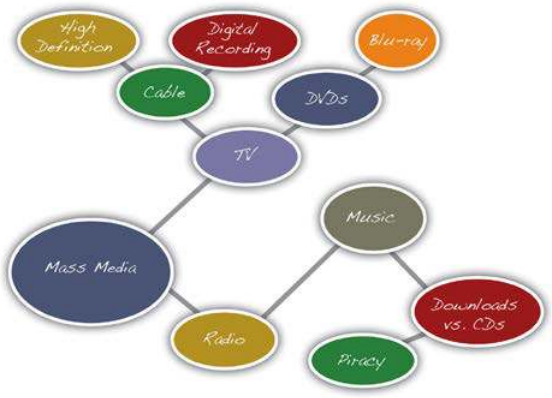


***Figure* 2.3.1**

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

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

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

? Exercise 2

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

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

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2.4: Thesis Statements

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

A thesis statement:

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

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

How do I get a thesis?

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

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

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

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

How do I know if my thesis is strong?

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

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

- To create a thesis statement simply follow this formula:

  TOPIC + CLAIM = THESIS STATEMENT

Examples:

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

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

? Exercise 2.4.1

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

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

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

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

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2.5: Planning the Organization

Organizing Before Outlining

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

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

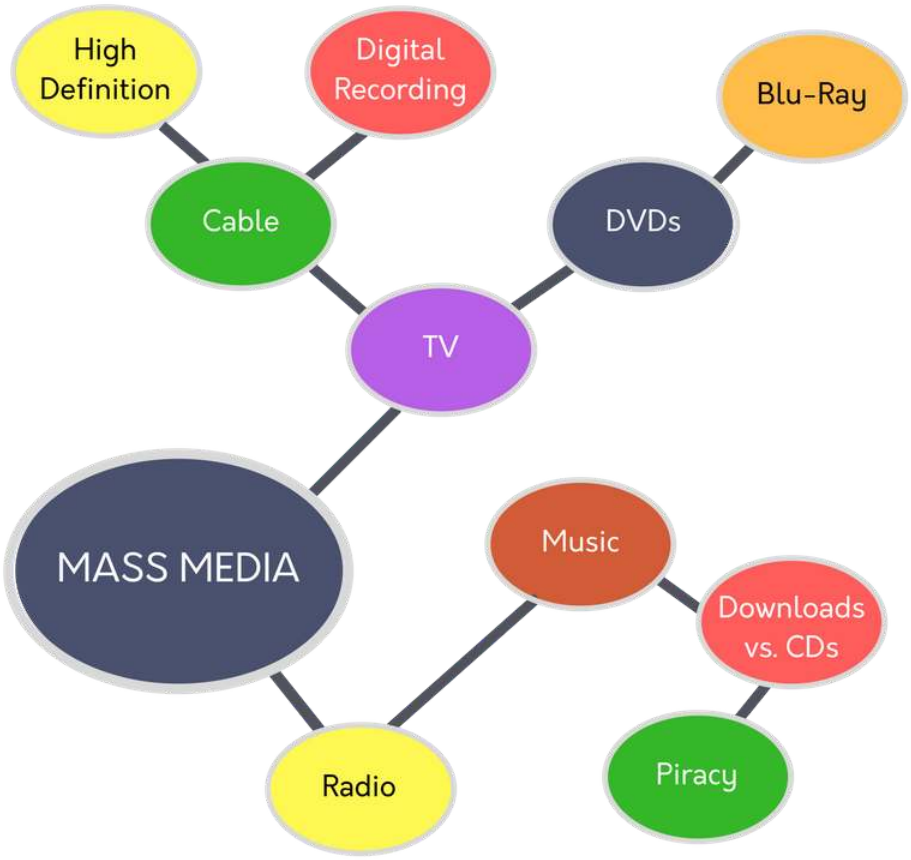


Figure 2.5.1 Clustering

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

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

Using a Clear Organizational Pattern

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

argument. However, most complex writing begins with an argument of some sort and then uses a combination of modes to relay one's message.

Depending on your topic, you might find it beneficial to use one of these common organizational patterns, either within individual paragraphs or within the entire essay:

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

General-to-specific	A common paragraph format is to present a general idea and then give examples.	The displays at the farmers' market do not lack for variety. You will see almost every kind of fresh, locally grown food you can imagine. The featured fruits on a given day might be as varied as pomegranates, persimmons, guava, jackfruit, and citron. Vegetables might include shiitake mushrooms, artichokes, avocados, and garlic. Some vendors also sell crafts, preserves, seeds, and other supplies suitable for starting your own garden.
Specific-to-general	The reverse of the above format is to give some examples and then summarize them with a general idea.	Your sense of smell is awakened by eighteen varieties of fresh roma tomatoes. Your mouth waters at the prospect of sampling the fresh breads. Your eye catches a glimpse of the colors of handmade, embroidered bags. You linger to touch a perfectly ripe peach. Your ears catch the strain of an impromptu jug band. A walk up and down the aisles of your local farmers' market will engage all of your senses.
Spatial	A paragraph using spatial organization presents details as you would naturally encounter them, such as from top to bottom or from the inside to the outside. In other words, details are presented based on their physical location.	From top to bottom, the spice booth at our farmers' market is amazing. Up high vendors display artwork painstakingly made with spices. At eye level, you see at least ten different fresh spices in small baggies. On the tabletop is located an assortment of tasting bowls with choices ranging from desserts to drinks to salads. Below the table, but out of the way of customers, are large bags of the different spices. Besides being a great use of space, the spice booth looks both professional and charming.

Structure of an Essay

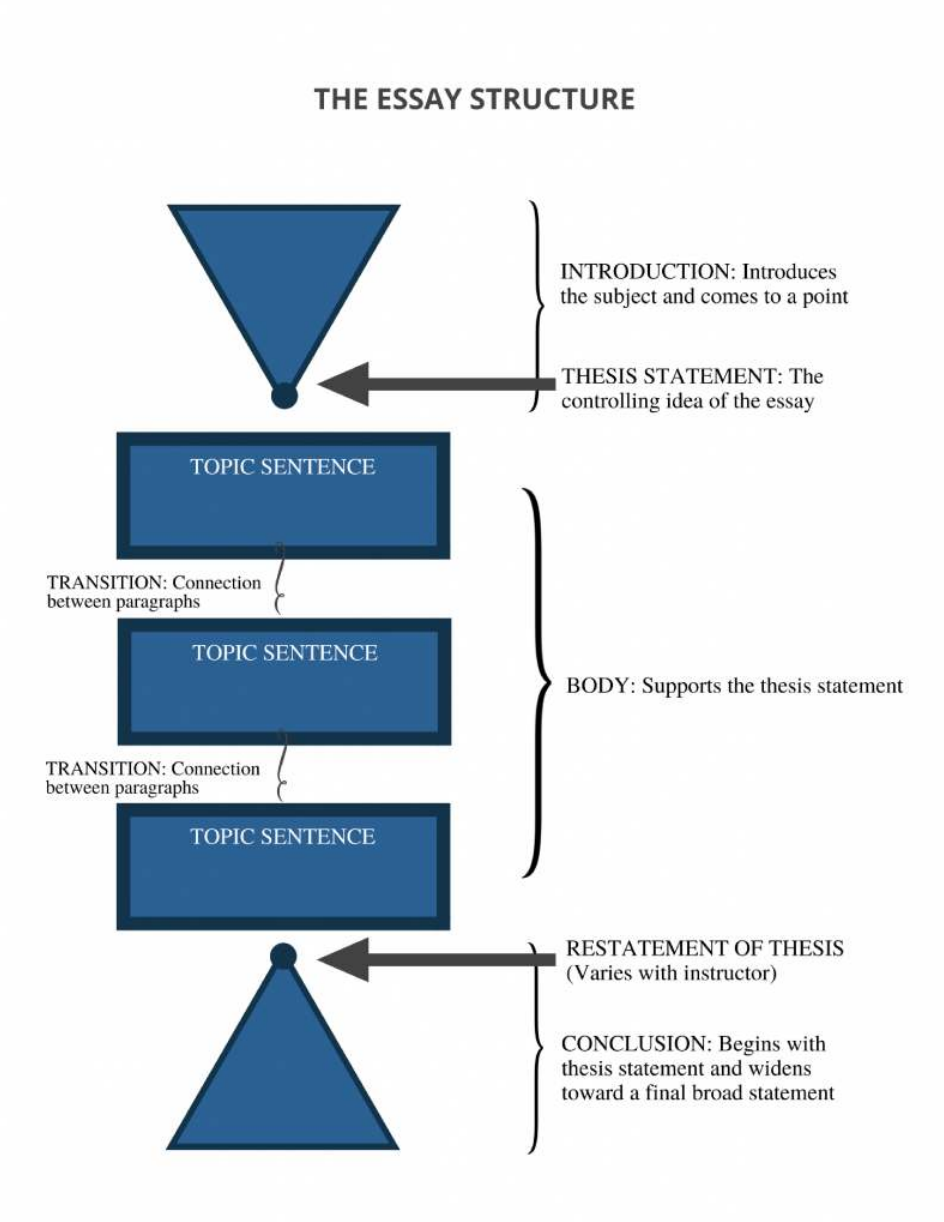


Figure 2.5.2 The Essay Structure

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

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

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

Each **body paragraph** should focus on a different supporting point that connects back to the thesis in the introduction. In the body paragraphs, use repetition sparingly and only when it is effective and necessary. Be consistent in tense, number, and person

throughout your paper as well. The entire body of supporting evidence should be focused on supporting your main idea without straying off topic or including unrelated ideas.

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

Traditional Formal Outline

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

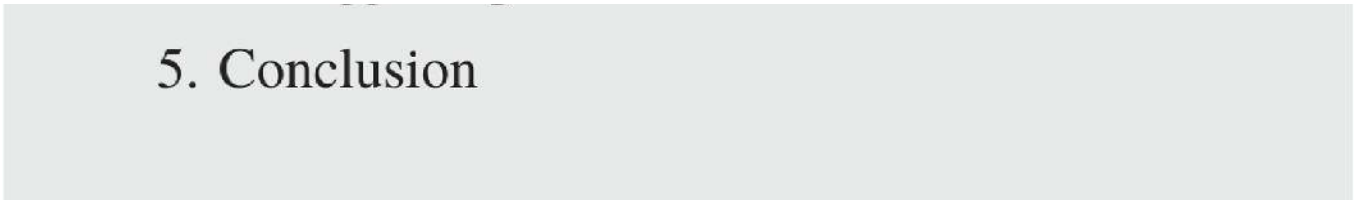


Figure 2.5.3 Traditional Formal Outline

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2.6: Methods of Organizing Your Writing

Now that you've identified your topic, it's time to focus on how to best organize the information. Keep in mind that the method of organization for essays and paragraphs is just as important as content. When you begin to draft an essay or paragraph, your ideas may seem to flow from your mind in a seemingly random manner. However, your readers, who bring to the table different backgrounds, viewpoints, and ideas, need you to clearly organize these ideas to help them draw connections between the body and the thesis. A solid organizational pattern not only helps readers to process and accept your ideas, but also gives your ideas a path that you can follow as you develop your essay (or paragraph). Knowing how you will organize your paragraphs allows you to better express and analyze your thoughts. In addition, planning the structure of your essay before you choose supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and targeted research. This section covers three ways to organize both essays and paragraphs: chronological order, order of importance, and spatial order.

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 used mostly 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 transitional 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.

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.

When using chronological order, your introduction should indicate the information you will cover and 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).

Order of Importance

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 the most important supporting point, such as in an essay that contains a thesis that is highly debatable. 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. 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.

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 readers, 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 to 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.

Example of Spatial Order Organization

Attached to my back bedroom wall is a small wooden rack dangling with red and turquoise necklaces that shimmer as I enter. Just to the right of the rack, billowy white curtains frame a large window with a sill that ends just six inches from the floor. The peace of such an image is a stark contrast to my desk, sitting 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 three-dimensional 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 much of the lavender wall.

The paragraph incorporates two objectives: using an implied topic sentence and applying spatial order. Often in a descriptive essay, the two objectives work together.

The following are possible transition words to include when using spatial order.

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Practice Activity

The original version of this chapter contained H5P content. You may want to remove or replace this element.

This section contains material from:

Crowther, Kathryn, Lauren Curtright, Nancy Gilbert, Barbara Hall, Tracienne Ravita, and Kirk Swenson. *Successful College Composition*. 2nd edition. Book 8. Georgia: English Open Textbooks, 2016. http://oer.galileo.usg.edu/english-textbooks/8. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

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2.7: Writing Paragraphs

Once you decide on a method for organizing your essay, you'll want to start drafting your paragraphs. Think of your paragraphs as links in a chain where coherence and continuity are key. Imagine reading one long block of text, with each idea blurring into the next. You are likely to lose interest in a piece of writing that is disorganized and spans many pages without breaks. Paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks, each paragraph focusing on only one main idea and presenting 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. For most types of informative or persuasive academic writing, writers find it helpful to think of the paragraph analogous to an essay, as each is controlled by a main idea or point, and that idea is developed by an organized group of more specific ideas. Thus, the thesis of the essay is analogous to the topic sentence of a paragraph, just as the supporting sentences in a paragraph are analogous to the supporting paragraphs in an essay.

In essays, each supporting paragraph adds another related main idea to support the writer's thesis, or controlling idea. Each related supporting idea is developed with facts, examples, and other details that explain it. By exploring and refining one idea at a time, writers build a strong case for their thesis. Effective paragraphing makes the difference between a satisfying essay that readers can easily process and one that requires readers to mentally organize the piece themselves. Thoughtful organization and development of each body paragraph leads to an effectively focused, developed, and coherent essay.

An effective paragraph contains three main parts:

- a topic sentence
- body, supporting sentences
- a concluding sentence

In **informative** and **persuasive** writing, the topic sentence is usually the first or second sentence of a paragraph and expresses its main idea, followed by supporting sentences that help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. In **narrative** and **descriptive** paragraphs, however, topic sentences may be implied rather than explicitly stated, with all supporting sentences working to create the main idea. If the paragraph contains a concluding sentence, it is the last sentence in the paragraph and reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words.

Creating Focused Paragraphs with Topic Sentences

The foundation of a paragraph is the topic sentence which expresses the main idea or point of the paragraph. A topic sentence functions in two ways: it clearly refers to and supports the essay's thesis, and it indicates what will follow in the rest of the paragraph. As the unifying sentence for the paragraph, it is the most general sentence, whereas all supporting sentences provide different types of more specific information such as facts, details, or examples.

An effective topic sentence has the following characteristics:

- A topic sentence provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.

Weak Example

First, we need a better way to educate students.

Explanation: The claim is vague because it does not provide enough information about what will follow and it is too broad to be covered effectively in one paragraph.

Stronger Example

Creating a national set of standards for math and English education will improve student learning in many states.

Explanation: The sentence replaces the vague phrase "a better way" and leads readers to expect supporting facts and examples as to why standardizing education in these subjects might improve student learning in many states.

- A good topic sentence is the most general sentence in the paragraph and thus 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.

Explanation: 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.

Explanation: This topic sentence omits the additional supporting detail so that it can be expanded upon later in the paragraph, yet the sentence still makes a claim about salary caps – improvement of the game.

- 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.

Explanation: The confusing sentence structure and unnecessary vocabulary bury the main idea, making it difficult for the reader to follow the topic sentence.

Stronger Example

Most forms of writing can be improved by first creating an outline.

Explanation: This topic sentence cuts out unnecessary verbiage and simplifies the previous statement, making it easier for the reader to follow. The writer can include examples of what kinds of writing can benefit from outlining in the supporting sentences.

Location of Topic Sentences

As previously discussed, a topic sentence can appear anywhere within a paragraph depending upon the mode of writing, or it can be implied such as in narrative or descriptive writing. In college-level expository or persuasive writing, placing an explicit topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph (the first or second sentence) makes it easier for readers to follow the essay and for writers to stay on topic, but writers should be aware of variations and maintain the flexibility to adapt to different writing projects. The following examples illustrate varying locations for the topic sentence. In each example, the topic sentence is underlined.

Topic Sentence Begins the Paragraph (General to Specific)

After reading the new TV guide this week I wondered why we are still being bombarded with reality shows, a plague that 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 and hope that other viewers will express their criticism. These producers must stop the constant stream of meaningless shows without plotlines. We've had enough reality television to last us a lifetime.

The first sentence tells readers 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 and why the writer finds it unappealing. 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. However, when utilizing a specific to general method, the topic sentence may be located later in the paragraph.

Topic Sentence Ends the Paragraph (Specific to General)

Last year, a cat traveled 130 miles to reach its family who 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 master 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.

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.

When the Topic Sentence Appears in the Middle of the Paragraph

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 underlined sentence is the topic sentence. It 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.

Implied Topic Sentences

Some well-organized paragraphs do not contain a topic sentence at all, a technique often used in descriptive and narrative writing. Instead of being directly stated, the main idea is implied in the content of the paragraph, as in the following narrative paragraph.

Example of Implied Topic Sentence

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 so that all the details in the paragraph can work together to convey the dominant impression of Luella's age. In a paragraph such as this one, an explicit topic sentence would seem awkward and heavy-handed. 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.

Developing Paragraphs

If you think of a paragraph as a sandwich, the supporting sentences are the filling between the bread. They make up the body of the paragraph by explaining, proving, or enhancing the controlling idea in the topic sentence. The overall method of development for paragraphs depends upon the essay as a whole and the purpose of each paragraph; thus paragraphs may be developed by using examples, description, narration, comparison and contrast, definition, cause and effect, classification and division. A writer may use one method or combine several methods.

Writers often want to know how many words a paragraph should contain, and the answer is that a paragraph should develop the idea, point, or impression completely enough to satisfy the writer and readers. Depending on their function, paragraphs can vary in length from one or two sentences, to over a page; however, in most college assignments, successfully developed paragraphs usually contain approximately one hundred to two hundred and fifty words and span one-fourth to two-thirds of a typed page. A series of short paragraphs in an academic essay can seem choppy and unfocused, whereas paragraphs that are one page or longer can tire readers. Giving readers a paragraph break on each page helps them maintain focus.

This advice does not mean, of course, that composing a paragraph of a particular number of words or sentences guarantees an effective paragraph. Writers must provide enough supporting sentences within paragraphs to develop the topic sentence and simultaneously carry forward the essay's main idea.

For example, in a descriptive paragraph about a room in the writer's childhood home, a length of two or three sentences is unlikely to contain enough details to create a picture of the room in the reader's mind, and it will not contribute in conveying the meaning of the place. In contrast, a half page paragraph, full of carefully selected vivid, specific details and comparisons, provides a fuller impression and engages the reader's interest and imagination. In descriptive or narrative paragraphs, supporting sentences present details and actions in vivid, specific language in objective or subjective ways, appealing to the readers' senses to make them see and experience the subject. In addition, some sentences writers use make comparisons that bring together or substitute the familiar with the unfamiliar, thus enhancing and adding depth to the description of the incident, place, person, or idea.

In a persuasive essay about raising the wage for certified nursing assistants, a paragraph might focus on the expectations and duties of the job, comparing them to that of a registered nurse. Needless to say, a few sentences that simply list the certified nurse's duties will not give readers a complete enough idea of what these healthcare professionals do. If readers do not have plenty of information about the duties and the writer's experience in performing them for what she considers inadequate pay, the paragraph fails to do its part in convincing readers that the pay is inadequate and should be increased.

In informative or persuasive writing, a supporting sentence usually offers one of the following:

- **Reason:** The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.
- **Fact:** Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.
- **Statistic:** Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.
- **Quotation:** "We will not allow this situation to continue," stated Senator Johns.
- **Example:** Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of fifty-five.

The type of supporting sentence you choose will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you are attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position, you should rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. Personal testimony in the form of an extended example can be used in conjunction with the other types of support.

Consider the elements in the following paragraph.

Example Persuasive Paragraph

Topic sentence: There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.

Sentence 1 (statistic): First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel- efficient gas-powered vehicle.

Sentence 2 (fact): Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving.

Sentence 3 (reason): Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump.

Sentence 4 (example): Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance.

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.

Sometimes the writing situation does not allow for research to add specific facts or other supporting information, but paragraphs can be developed easily with examples from the writer’s own experience.

Farheya, a student in a freshman English Composition class, quickly drafted an essay during a timed writing assignment in class. To practice improving paragraph development, she selected the body paragraph below to add support:

Example of Original Body Paragraph

Topic: Would you be better off if you didn’t own a television? Discuss.

Lack of ownership of a television set is also a way to preserve innocence, and keep the exposure towards anything inappropriate at bay. From simply watching a movie, I have seen things I shouldn’t have, no matter how fast I switch the channel. Television shows not only display physical indecency, but also verbal. Many times movies do voice-overs of profane words, but they also leave a few words uncensored. Seeing how all ages can flip through and see or hear such things make t.v. toxic for the mind, and without it I wouldn’t have to worry about what I may accidentally see or hear.

The original paragraph identifies two categories of indecent material, and there is mention of profanity to provide a clue as to what the student thinks is indecent. However, the paragraph could use some examples to make the idea of inappropriate material clearer. Farheya considered some of the television shows she had seen and made a few changes.

Example of Revised Body Paragraph

Not owning a television set would also be a way to preserve innocence and keep my exposure to anything inappropriate at bay. While searching for a program to view, I have seen things I shouldn’t have, no matter how fast I switched the channel. The synopsis of Euro Trip, which describes high school friends traveling across Europe, leads viewers to think that the film is an innocent adventure; however; it is filled with indecency, especially when the students reach Amsterdam. The movie Fast and Furious has the same problem since the women are all half-naked in half tops and mini-skirts or short- shorts. Television shows not only display physical indecency, but also verbal. Many television shows have no filters, and the characters say profane words freely. On Empire, the main characters Cookie and Lucious Lyon use profane words during their fights throughout entire episodes. Because The Big Bang Theory is a show about a group of science geeks and their cute neighbor, viewers might think that these science geniuses’ conversations would be about their current research or other science topics. Instead, their characters regularly engage in conversations about their personal lives that should be kept private. The ease of flipping through channels and seeing or hearing such things makes t.v. toxic for the mind, and without a television I wouldn’t have to worry about what I may accidentally see or hear.

Farheya’s addition of a few examples helps to convey why she thinks she would be better off without a television.

Concluding Sentences

An effective concluding sentence draws together all the ideas raised in your paragraph. It reminds readers of the main point—the topic sentence—without restating it in exactly the same words. Using the hamburger example, the top bun (the topic sentence) and the bottom bun (the concluding sentence) are very similar. They frame the “meat” or body of the paragraph.

Compare the topic sentence and concluding sentence from the first example on hybrid cars:

> **Topic Sentence:** There are many advantages to owning a hybrid car.
>
> **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.

Notice the use of the synonyms *advantages* and *benefits*. The concluding sentence reiterates the idea that owning a hybrid is advantageous without using the exact same words. It also summarizes two examples of the advantages covered in the supporting sentences: low running costs and environmental benefits.

Writers should avoid introducing any new ideas into a concluding sentence because a conclusion is intended to provide the reader with a sense of completion. Introducing a subject that is not covered in the paragraph will confuse readers and weaken the writing.

A concluding sentence may do any of the following:

- Restate the main idea.

> **Example**
>
> Childhood obesity is a growing problem in the United States.

- Summarize the key points in the paragraph

> **Example**
>
> A lack of healthy choices, poor parenting, and an addiction to video games are among the many factors contributing to childhood obesity.

- Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.

> **Example**
>
> These statistics indicate that unless we take action, childhood obesity rates will continue to rise.

- Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.

> **Example**
>
> Based on this research, more than 60 percent of children in the United States will be morbidly obese by the year 2030 unless we take evasive action.

- Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.

> **Example**
>
> Childhood obesity is an entirely preventable tragedy.

Paragraph Length

Although paragraph length is discussed in the section on developing paragraphs with supporting sentences, some additional reminders about when to start a new paragraph may prove helpful to writers:

- If a paragraph is over a page long, consider providing a paragraph break for readers. Look for a logical place to divide the paragraph; then revise the opening sentence of the second paragraph to maintain coherence.
- A series of short paragraphs can be confusing and choppy. Examine the content of the paragraphs and combine ones with related ideas or develop each one further.
- When dialogue is used, begin a new paragraph each time the speaker changes.
- Begin a new paragraph to indicate a shift in subject, tone, or time and place.

Improving Paragraph Coherence

A strong paragraph holds together well, flowing 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 a combination of elements:

- **A clear organizational pattern:** chronological (for narrative writing and describing processes), spatial (for descriptions of people or places), order of importance, general to specific (deductive), specific to general (inductive)
- **Transitional words and phrases:** These connecting words describe a relationship between ideas.

- **Repetition of ideas:** This element helps keep the parts of the paragraph together by maintaining focus on the main idea, so this element reinforces both paragraph coherence and unity.

In the following example, notice the use of transitions (**bolded**) and key words (underlined):

Example of Transition Words

Owning a hybrid car benefits both the owner and the environment. **First**, these cars 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 dependency 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.

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 he or she has another point to make in support of the topic sentence. 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).

In addition to transition words, the writer repeats the word *hybrid* (and other references such as *these cars*, and *they*), and ideas related to *benefits* to keep the paragraph focused on the topic and hold it together.

To include a summarizing transition for the concluding sentence, the writer could rewrite the final sentence as follows:

> In conclusion, 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 the phrase "in conclusion" certainly reinforces the idea of summary and closure, it is not necessary in this case and seems redundant, as the sentence without the phrase already repeats and summarizes the benefits presented in the topic sentence and flows smoothly from the preceding quotation. The second half of the sentence, in making a prediction about the future, signals a conclusion, also making the phrase "in conclusion" unnecessary. The original version of the concluding sentence also illustrates how varying sentence openings can improve paragraph coherence. As writers continue to practice and develop their style, they more easily make these decisions between using standard transitional phrases and combining the repetition of key ideas with varied sentence openings.

Table 5.3.1 provides some useful transition words and phrases to connect sentences within paragraphs as well as to connect body paragraphs:

[table id=3 /]

Practice Activity

The original version of this chapter contained H5P content. You may want to remove or replace this element.

This section contains material from:

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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

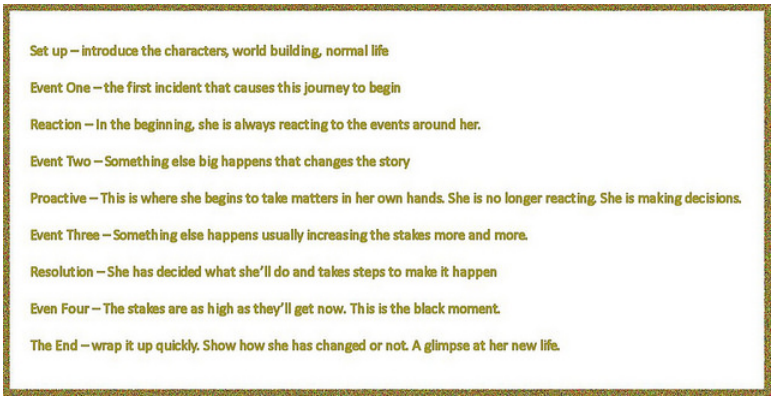


Figure: from Amazon.

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

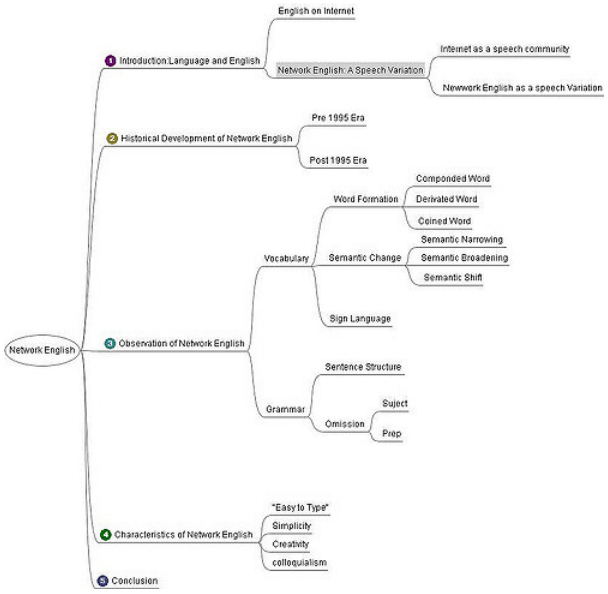


Figure: from Amazon AWS.

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.



Video 2.8.1

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.

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This page most recently updated on June 3, 2020.

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2.9: Drafting

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

Goals and Strategies for Drafting

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

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

Making the Writing Process Work for You

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

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

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

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

Discovering the Basic Elements of a First Draft

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

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

The Bowtie Method

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

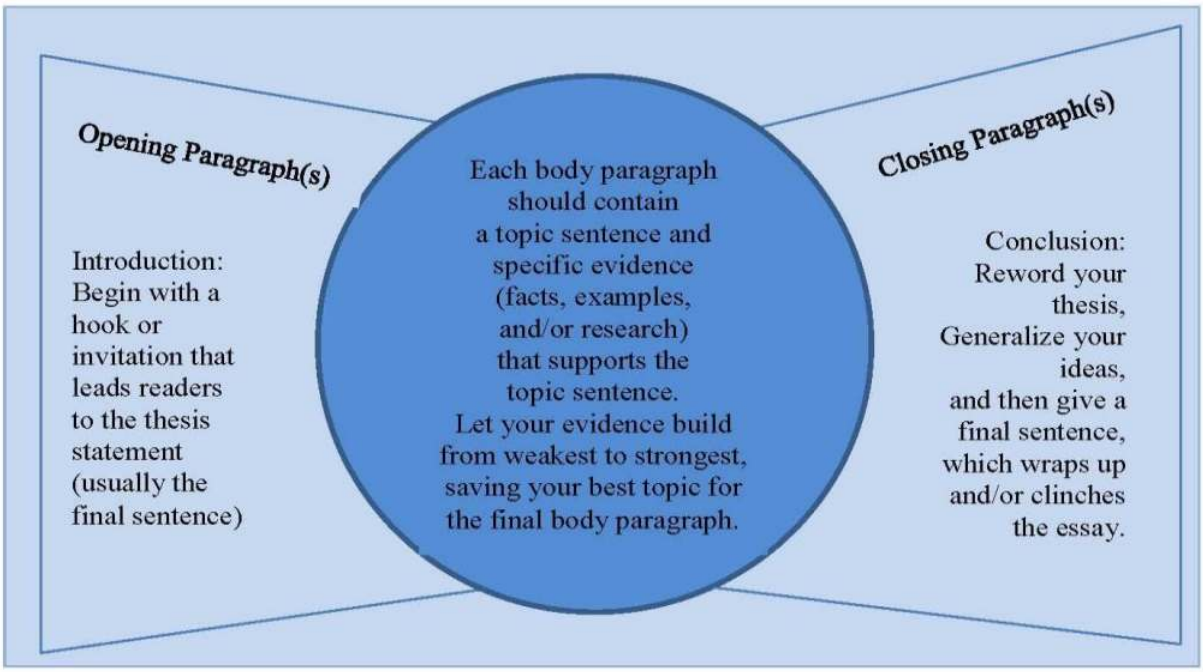


Figure 2.8.12.8.1 *- Figure of the "Bowtie Method"*

Starting Your First Draft

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

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

> *Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.*
>
> *Purpose: My purpose is to inform readers about the wide variety of consumer digital technology available in stores and to explain why the specifications for these products,*

expressed in numbers that average consumer don't understand, often cause bad or misinformed buying decisions.

Audience: My audience is my instructor and members of this class. Most of them are not heavy into technology except for the usual laptops, cell phones, and MP3 players, which are not topics I'm writing about. I'll have to be as exact and precise as I can be when I explain possibly unfamiliar product specifications. At the same time, they're more with it electronically than my grandparents' VCR-flummoxed generation, so I won't have to explain every last detail.

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

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

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

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

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

> *accommodations have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries. What is a buyer to do?*

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

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

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

Outline

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

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

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

Outline

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

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

LCD rivals. Plasma screens show decent lacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints. Large flatpanel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need.

? Exercise 1

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

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

Writing a Title

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

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

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

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

Drafting Body Paragraphs

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

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

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

Types of Supporting Evidence

1. **Facts**: Facts are the best kind of evidence to use because they often cannot be disputed. They can support your stance by providing background information on or a solid foundation for your point of view. However, some facts may still need explanation. For example, the sentence "The most populated state in the United States is California" is a pure fact, but it may require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument.

2. **Judgments**: Judgments are conclusions drawn from the given facts. Judgments are more credible than opinions because they are founded upon careful reasoning and examination of a topic.
3. **Testimony**: Testimony consists of direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness. An eyewitness is someone who has direct experience with a subject; he adds authenticity to an argument based on facts. An expert witness is a person who has extensive experience with a topic. This person studies the facts and provides commentary based on either facts or judgments, or both. An expert witness adds authority and credibility to an argument.
4. **Personal observation**: Personal observation is similar to testimony, but personal observation consists of your testimony. It reflects what you know to be true because you have experiences and have formed either opinions or judgments about them. For instance, if you are one of five children and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child's social development, you could use your own experience to support your thesis.

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

Topic Sentences

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

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

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

Example 2.9.1:

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

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

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

Supporting Detail Sentences

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

> ***Thesis**: Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.*
>
> *I. Dogs can scare cyclists.*
>
> *A. Cyclists are forced to zigzag on the roads.*
> *B. School children panic and turn wildly on their bikes.*

C. People walking at night freeze in fear.

II. Loose dogs are traffic hazards.

A. Dogs in the street make people swerve their cars.

B. To avoid dogs, drivers run into other cars or pedestrians.

C. Children coaxing dogs across city streets create danger.

III. Unleashed dogs damage gardens.

A. They step on flowers and vegetables.

B. They destroy hedges by urinating on them.

C. They mess up lawns by digging holes.

? Exercise 2

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

Drafting Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs

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

Writing an Introduction

An introduction serves the following purposes:

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

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

Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph

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

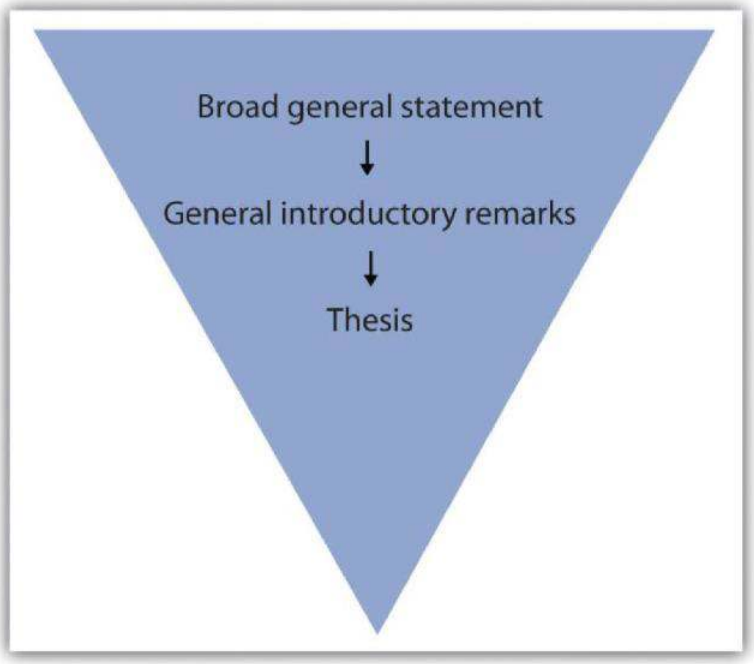


***Figure* 2.9.1** - *Funnel Technique*

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

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

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

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

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

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

? Exercise 3

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

Writing a Conclusion

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

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

The Anatomy of a Strong Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

? Exercise 4

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

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

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2.10: Revising and Editing

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

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

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

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

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

- Take a break. You are proud of what you wrote, but you might be too close to it to make changes. Set aside your writing for a few hours or even a day until you can look at it objectively.
- Ask someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.
- Use the resources that your college provides. Find out where your school's writing lab is located and ask about the assistance they provide online and in person.
- Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why? Many people hear the words critic, critical, and criticism and pick up only negative vibes that provoke feelings that make them blush, grumble, or shout. However, as a writer and a thinker, you need to learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way and have high expectations for your work. You also need to train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. For this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

When you reread your writing to find revisions to make, look for each type of problem in a separate sweep. Read it straight through once to locate any problems with unity.

Read it straight through a second time to find problems with coherence. You may follow this same practice during many stages of the writing process.

Creating Unity and Coherence

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

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

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

Creating Unity

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

Mariah stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of her essay she tentatively titled "Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?" But a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset her enough that she digressed

from the main topic of her third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store she visited. When she revised her essay, she deleted the off- topic sentences that affected the unity of the paragraph. Read the following paragraph twice, the first time without Mariah's changes, and the second time with them.

Mariah's Changes

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

Creating Coherence

Careful writers use transitions to clarify how the ideas in their sentences and paragraphs are related. These words and phrases help the writing flow smoothly. Adding transitions is not the only way to improve coherence, but they are often useful and give a mature feel to your essay. The Table of Common Transitional Words and Phrases (table 5.3.1) groups many common transitions according to their purpose.

Being Clear and Concise

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

Identifying Wordiness

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

- Sentences that begin with *There is* or *There are*.

Examples

Wordy: There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors.

Revised: The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.

- Sentences with unnecessary modifiers.

Examples

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 selective 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.

Examples

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.

Examples

Wordy: It might perhaps be said that using a GPS device is something that is a benefit to drivers who have a poor sense of direction.

Revised: Using a GPS device benefits drivers who have a poor sense of direction.

- Sentences with constructions that can be shortened.

Examples

Wordy: The ebook reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-sixty uncle bought an ebook reader, and his wife bought an ebook reader, too.

Revised: The ebook reader, a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-sixty uncle and his wife both bought ebook readers.

Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

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

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

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

Mariah's Revisions

Finally, nothing ^ confuses buyers more than purchasingis more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV), with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on.^ and with

There's a good reason. for this confusion. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. The first big decision is ^ involves screen resolution, you want.^ whichScreen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or ^ as 768p. The trouble is that ^ onif you have a smaller screen, 32-inch or 37-inch diagonal, ^ screen, viewers will not you won't be able to tell the difference ^ between them with the naked eye. The other important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer ^ deeper blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. However, large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. ^ Only after buyers are totally certain they know what they want should they open their wallets.Don't buy more television than you need!

Completing a Peer Review

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

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

Using Feedback

Using Feedback Objectively

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

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

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

- Determine if the feedback supports the purpose of the assignment.
- Determine if the suggested revisions are appropriate to the audience. Then, using these standards, accept or reject revision feedback.

Editing Your Draft

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

The next step after revising the content is editing. When you edit, you examine the surface features of your text. You examine your spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation. You also make sure you use the proper format when creating your finished assignment.

Editing often takes time. Budgeting time into the writing process allows you to complete additional edits after revising. Editing and proofreading your writing helps you create a finished work that represents your best efforts. Here are a few more tips to remember about your readers:

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

Checklists for Editing Your Writing Grammar

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

Sentence Structure

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

Punctuation

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

Mechanics and Usage

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

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

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

Formatting

Remember to use proper format when creating your finished assignment. Sometimes an instructor, a department, or a college will require students to follow specific instructions on titles, margins, page numbers, or the location of the writer's name.

These requirements may be more detailed and rigid for research projects and term papers, which often observe the American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA) style guides, especially when citations of sources are included. To ensure the format is correct and follows any specific instructions, make a final check before you submit an assignment.

Practice Activity

The original version of this chapter contained H5P content. You may want to remove or replace this element.

This section contains material from:

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2.11: Transitions

Using Transitions

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

Commonly Used Transition Words

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

Maintaining Internal Integrity of Paragraphs

Pattern	Explanation	Example
Linkages	Paragraphs with unity flow well so that readers can follow along easily. You need to present an idea and then link the rest of the ideas in the paragraph together. Do not leave any unifying for your readers to do mentally. Do it all for them.	Not all the booths at a farmers' market feature food. One couple has a booth that sells only fresh flowers. They display some flowers in antique containers and sell the flowers, the containers, or both. A clothesline above our heads displays a variety of dried flowers. A table holds about fifty vases of varying sizes, and they are all full of flowers. Some vases hold only one kind of long-stem flowers. Others hold mixtures of uncut flowers. Still, others display gorgeous arrangements. Both the man and the woman wear a wreath of flowers on their heads. The whole display is so attractive and smells so fabulous that it really draws people.

Parallelism	Parallelism means that you maintain the same general wording and format for similar situations throughout the paragraph so that once readers figure out what is going on, they can easily understand the whole paragraph.	The history of this farmers' market followed a typical pattern. It started out in the 1970s as a co-op of local farmers, featuring a small city block of modest tables and temporary displays every Saturday morning from April to October from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. In the early 1990s, with the help of a grant from the city, the market expanded its footprint to a larger, more centrally located city block with ample parking. It benefited greatly from the installation of permanent booths, electrical outlets, and a ready water supply. These amenities drew far more customers and merchants. Its popularity reached unprecedented levels by 2000, when the city offered to help with the staffing needed to keep it open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays and from noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays. Recently, discussions began about how to open the market on weeknights in the summer from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Consistency	A paragraph with consistency uses the same point of view and the same verb tense throughout. In other words, if you are using third person in the beginning of the paragraph, you use it throughout the paragraph. If you are using present tense to start the paragraph, you stick with it.	There comes a time each year when you must begin the all-important step of actually harvesting your vegetable garden. You will want to pick some of your vegetables before they are fully ripe. Eggplants, cucumbers, and squash fall into this category because they can further ripen once you have picked them. On the other hand, you will find that tomatoes, pumpkins, and most melons really need to ripen fully before you harvest them. You should also keep in mind that you would need plenty of storage space for your bounty. If you have a good harvest, you might want to have a few friends in mind, especially as recipients for your squash and cucumbers.

Contributors and Attributions

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2.12: Revising

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

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

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

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

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

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

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

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

Completing a Peer Review

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

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

Questions for Peer Review

Title of essay: _____

Date: _____

Writer's name: _____

Peer reviewer's name: _____

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

These places in your essay are not clear to me:

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

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

? Exercise 1

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

Using Feedback

Using Feedback Objectively

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

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

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

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

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

Writing at Work

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

Revising to Create Unity and Coherence

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

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

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

Creating Unity

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

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

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

? Exercise 2

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

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

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

Creating Coherence

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

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

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

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

? Exercise 3

1. Answer the following questions about Mariah's revised paragraph.
    1. Do you agree with the transitions and other changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain.
    2. What transition words or phrases did Mariah add to her paragraph? Why did she choose each one?
    3. What effect does adding additional sentences have on the coherence of the paragraph? Explain. When you read both versions aloud, which version has a more logical flow of ideas? Explain.
2. Now return to the first draft of the essay you wrote and revise it for coherence. Add transition words and phrases where they are needed, and make any other changes that are needed to improve the flow and connection between ideas.

Being Clear and Concise

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

Identifying Wordiness

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

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

? Exercise 4

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

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2.13: Word Choice and Style

Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

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

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

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

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

? Exercise 1

1. Answer the following questions about Mariah's revised paragraph:
   a. Read the unrevised and the revised paragraphs aloud. Explain in your own words how changes in word choice have affected Mariah's writing.
   b. Do you agree with the changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which changes would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain. What other changes would you have made?

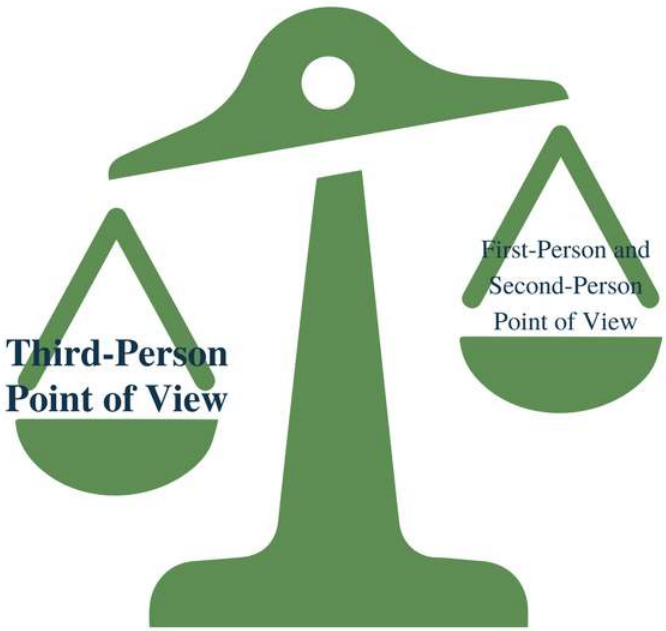
c. What effect does removing contractions and the pronoun you have on the tone of the paragraph? How would you characterize the tone now? Why?

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

What Point of View Should Be Used in Academic Writing?

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

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



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

Figure 2.13.1Point of View

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

- Using *I* shifts the focus from the topic and argument to the one making the argument. *You* are not the focus of the essay; your argument and its support are. The insertion of *I* into a sentence alters not only the way a sentence might sound but also the composition of the sentence itself. *I* is often the subject of a sentence. If the subject of the essay is supposed to be, for example,

smoking, then by inserting yourself into the sentence, you are effectively displacing the subject of the essay into a secondary position. Note the difference in these two sentences:

Smoking is bad.

I think smoking is bad.

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

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

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

Tip

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

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2.14: Editing

Editing Your Draft

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

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

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

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

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

Checklists for Editing Your Writing

Grammar

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

Sentence Structure

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

Punctuation

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

Mechanics and Usage

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

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

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

? Exercise 1

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

Writing at Work

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

? Exercise 2

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

Formatting

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

Sample Student Paper with Outline

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

Sample Student Outline

Pere J. Ellis II

English 1101 Honors

Dr. Cox

February 25, 2014

Outline

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

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

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

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

Sample Student Paper

Pere J. Ellis II

English 1101 Honors

Dr. Cox

February 25, 2014

Aquaponics: A Viable Solution to World Hunger

Hunger and food shortages have plagued the world over and over again. The World agricultural community has historical problems with the demand and the need for more food. Technological advancements such as the bioengineering of plants have allowed them to thrive in harsher environments and produce high yields. But these advancements have not solved the world's food problems. One of the more recent developments is a technique known as aquaponics. Aquaponics is a farming method that utilizes a balanced ecological cycle between plants and aquatic animals, which creates surprising results. The cycle starts with transferring fresh water aquatic animal excrement to plants as a source of nutrients. The excrement is then filtered by the plants, and the water is recycled back to the freshwater aquatic animal environment. The cycle is constantly repeated until the plants and animals are harvested. An aquaponics system is the best system for farming because it is the most easily managed and environmentally friendly system available, and it is capable of producing impressive crop yields several times higher than more traditional farming systems practiced today.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The adaptable system of aquaponics is the best answer to solving world hunger because it produces organic and environmentally friendly high yield crops on less land than more traditional farming methods. Even though several aquaponics systems have been built in differing environments throughout world and have done quite well, aquaponics still has not been accepted as a viable alternative to traditional farming. Perhaps this is because it is a new idea and will take a while to catch on. Nevertheless, once aquaponics is accepted as a solution, the world may finally be rid of one of its longest living problems.

? Exercise 3

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

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

Exercise 4

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

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Reflective Writing

3.1: Why It Matters- Reflection
3.2: Introduction to Reflection in Thinking and Learning
3.3: What is Reflective Thinking?
3.4: Reflection as Academic Work – Knowledge Types
3.5: Reflection as a Continuum
3.6: Introduction to Reflective Writing
3.7: Frameworks for Reflective Writing
3.8: Process of Reflective Writing
3.9: Putting It Together- Reflection

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3.1: Why It Matters- Reflection



Psychologist and educational reformer John Dewey once noted, “We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience.” Throughout college, you will build an intellectual scaffolding that will not only prepare you for a career but also help you understand your identity and your place in the world. Reflection is the critical thinking skill that connects that scaffolding, building bridges between information and understanding, theory and practice, isolated knowledge and collective insight.

Reflection can be practiced and improved. By understanding the thinking processes and tools that comprise effective reflection, you will be taking the first step toward greater understanding of not only yourself but also the complex world in which we live.

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3.2: Introduction to Reflection in Thinking and Learning

Reflect, often. If we take time to notice what just happened, we learn how the system operates. Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences, and failing to achieve anything useful. It's amazing to me how much we do, but how little time we spend reflecting on what we just did.

– Meg Wheatley

What you'll learn to do:

In this section, you'll learn about the cognitive process of reflection. You might think that reflection is the same thing as narration, but there are some important differences. Good reflective thinking is the prerequisite for good reflective writing.

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3.3: What is Reflective Thinking?

Learning Objectives

- Define reflection as an intellectual process

Reflective thinking involves “consideration of the larger context, the meaning, and the implications of an experience or action.”[1] In other words, reflection doesn’t just mean jotting down what you did or plan to do. It means considering why what you did or plan to do matters; it means writing to help you better understand something; it means exploring emotions, feelings, reactions, and knowledges; and it can even mean catharsis. Think of reflection as exploring the “so what” instead of just the “what.” Let’s look at an example:

Example

Many people keep diaries or write in journals. There has been a shift from paper to digital over time, but the concept is the same: Writing about experiences helps people make more sense of them. Let’s say John has been arguing a lot with his girlfriend lately, and he is upset about the situation. Writing about the experiences affords him the opportunity to express his feelings and to consider some of the bigger picture ideas such as the future of their relationship, his happiness, and what causes their arguments. In short, reflective writing can be a rewarding mental exercise. This is just one example of so many reasons why people reflect in their personal lives, but let’s turn to academic reflection.

A lot of college students take four or five classes per semester while juggling many other responsibilities. So how do you maximize your learning in these classes? One way is through reflection. Take a lecture-based science class for example. A teacher can talk to a class for fifty minutes while students take notes, and students can study those notes in preparation for the test. But what too often happens in these instances is rote memorization of information in order to perform well on an exam. Some students with good memories may recall certain information down the road, but much of it probably gets lost over time.

What if, though, students were asked to use reflection to apply or further consider the knowledge, which is how many scholars insist students learn best. A scenario might look something like this:

Example

A Biology teacher lectures for fifteen-twenty minutes on pathogens. Then, students take five minutes or so to write a short reflective piece capturing what they think they have learned, what questions they still have and why, perhaps their own experience with or knowledge about pathogens before the course, and why such knowledge might matter to them down the road. Ideally, the chance for students to stop and reflect, and maybe even make a personal connection to the material, will help them not just remember, but better understand the material and its significance. Plus, in a typical fifty minute class, this pattern can happen a couple of times.

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1. Branch, W. T., & Paranjape, A. (2002). "Feedback and Reflection: Teaching Methods for Clinical Settings." *Academic Medicine,77*(12): 1185-8. ↵

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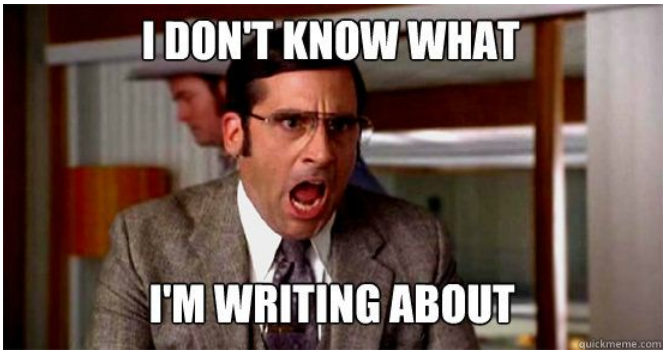
3.4: Reflection as Academic Work – Knowledge Types

Learning Objectives

- Identify knowledge types embedded within reflection

There is a widespread belief that people have different learning styles (visual, aural, etc.) and that those varying styles allow us understand and make sense of material, such as the content in college courses. In reality, though, an overwhelming amount of research shows that people do not have different learning styles despite the prevalence of such views. We are all capable of learning in different ways, but central to becoming a better learner is critically examining ourselves. In other words, we need to be able to reflect honestly about what we learn, how we learn, and how we can best understand what we learn.

According to the old saying from Confucius, “To know what you know and what you do not know, that is true knowledge.” Reflection is an act that helps you better determine your own true knowledge about something. For many students, acknowledging their limitations or what they don’t understand about certain material can be key to real learning. Without such practices we may be faking our way through learning, which isn’t really learning at all. Inversely, we should strive to better and honestly understand our strengths, as well as our growth and progress. You have probably had friends who are good at a particular school subject, and when they are asked how they know so much about it or how they do so well at it, they say something like “It’s just easy for me” or “I’ve always been good at it.” But those answers oversimplify what learning is. If those students reflected on the question more, they might find interesting answers that help them more deeply consider themselves as learners. Writing can help us do that kind of deeper reflection.



While reflection certainly is a mental act, many people write to help make sense of their thoughts. And writing about your own writing is a deeply metacognitive practice that can help you more broadly as a learner.

Reflective writing about your own work allows you to explore the four knowledge types. Use the matching exercise below to learn about knowledge types.

Learn by Doing: Knowledge Types

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- Meme: I don't know what I'm writing about! . **Located at**: http://quickmeme.com. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Fair Use

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3.5: Reflection as a Continuum

Learning Objectives

- Identify knowledge types embedded within reflection

Many people may view reflection as thinking about an event that has happened, but that is only part of it. Reflection can be about something that happened in the past, is happening now, or will/might happen in the future. For example, as a college student, you might reflect on a math test you took last month, how your current homework assignment is puzzling you, and how a math class might impact you next semester. It is important to see reflection as a continuing process because, as you will see in the next section, it is a valuable part of learning and growing in all disciplines and in all aspects of life.

Reflecting Across the Disciplines

If reflection seems like an act unique to your writing class, think about other courses and majors and how we see instances of reflection. Consider health fields and professions. Early in their educations, future nurses, doctors, and other health professionals are taught the importance of reflection in their work. People such as nurses and doctors regularly reflect on the condition of their patients, the care they provide, potential treatments, and future care. This type of thinking requires practice, which is why reflection is part of the courses these students take. For most people, it is not enough to just reflect in the mind. Writing allows health care professionals to keep a reflective log of patients (think about why nurses and doctors rely on those charts and patient records so much).

Further, it is important to think of learning as interconnected, and reflection may allow a space for connections to happen:

- Students in Mathematics may reflect on previous problems they have solved to help them think about pathways to tackle a more complex problem.
- Students in Economics may reflect on a simple economic model to help make more sense of complicated information.
- Students in Education may reflect on their growing knowledges of technology to help lay out innovative lesson plans for the classrooms of the future.

All of these are examples of how we use existing knowledge to learn more. In the discipline of Writing Studies, scholar Kathy Yancey posits that reflection is “a means of going beyond the text to include a sense of the ongoing conversations that texts enter into”.[1] In other words, your knowledge doesn’t exist in a vacuum, and this is true for all subjects. When you write, you seek to advance the knowledge of you and your readers, so reflecting on where what you are writing fits into what already has been written is meaningful.

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1. Yancey, Kathleen Blake (1998). *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press. ↵

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3.6: Introduction to Reflective Writing

The following video, produced by the Hull University Skills Team, provides a great overview of reflective writing. Watch the video and then complete the exercise below.

About Reflective Writing

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: http://pb.libretexts.org/wsl/?p=52

Check your understanding with these quick practice questions:
https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...essments/19551

What you'll learn to do:

In this section, you'll learn about different frameworks and methods for writing reflective essays. You'll also think about the characteristics of good reflective writing and develop specific skills for succeeding with reflective writing assignment prompts.

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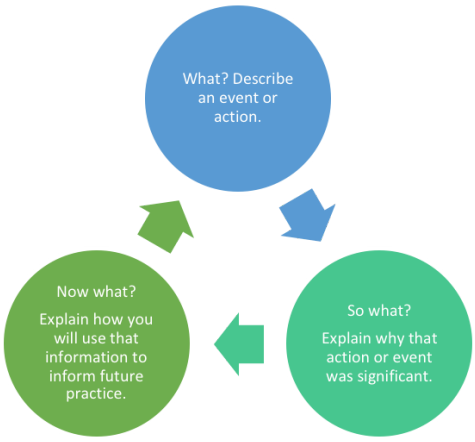
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3.7: Frameworks for Reflective Writing

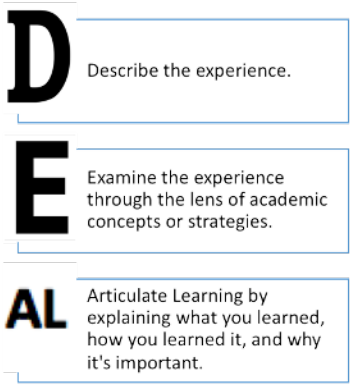
Learning Objectives

- Recognize possible structures for reflective writing
- Recognize component skills of reflective writing

Researchers have developed several different frameworks or models for how reflective writing can be structured. John Driscoll[1] used Terry Borton's[2] three stem questions to devise The Borton Framework pictured below.



The DEAL model[3] structures reflective writing through a three-stage approach of description, examination, and articulation of learning.



The DIEP model (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985) incorporates aspects of both the Borton and DEAL frameworks with its emphasis on significance and future action.



Each of the models speaks to the reflective writer's tasks: briefly describing an event or experience; analyzing the significance and value of the experience in terms of larger theory or practice; and forecasting how the learning might be useful in other situations.

1. Driscoll J (1994) Reflective practice for practise - a framework of structured reflection for clinical areas. *Senior Nurse* 14 (1):47–50 ↵
2. Ash, S.L, Clayton, P.H., & Moses, M.G. (2009). Learning through critical reflection: A tutorial for service-learning students (instructor version). Raleigh, NC. ↵
3. Boud, D.; Keogh, R.; Walker, D. (Eds) (1985) Reflection: turning experience into learning. London: Kogan Page ↵

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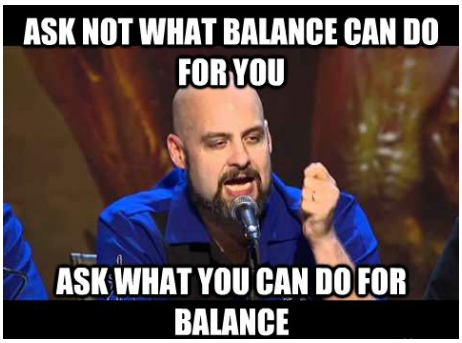
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3.8: Process of Reflective Writing

Learning Objectives

- Recognize possible structures for reflective writing
- Recognize component skills of reflective writing

Reflective writing is a balancing act with many factors at play: description, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and future application. Reflective writers must weave their personal perspectives with evidence of deep, critical thought as they make connections between theory, practice, and learning. The steps below should help you find the appropriate balance among all these factors.



1st Step: Review the assignment

As with any writing situation, the first step in writing a reflective piece is to clarify the task. Reflective assignments can take many forms, so you need to understand exactly what your instructor is asking you to do. Some reflective assignments are short, just a paragraph or two of unpolished writing. Usually the purpose of these reflective pieces is to capture your immediate impressions or perceptions. For example, your instructor might ask you at the end of a class to write quickly about a concept from that day's lesson. That type of reflection helps you and your instructor gauge your understanding of the concept.

Other reflections are academic essays that can range in length from several paragraphs to several pages. The purpose of these essays is to critically reflect on and support an original claim(s) about a larger experience, such as an event you attended, a project you worked on, or your writing development. These essays require polished writing that conforms to academic conventions, such as articulation of a thesis and substantive revision. They might address a larger audience than you and your instructor, including, for example, your classmates, your family, a scholarship committee, etc.

It's important, before you begin writing, that you can identify the assignment's purpose, audience, intended message or content, and requirements. If you can't, ask your instructor for clarification.

2nd Step: Generate ideas for content

Refer to the Borton, DIEL, and DIEP models as you generate ideas for your writing. To meet the tasks identified in those models you might consider things like:

- Recollections of an experience, assignment, or course
- Ideas or observations made during that event
- Questions, challenges, or areas of doubt
- Strategies employed to solve problems
- A-ha moments linking theory to practice or learning something new
- Connections between this learning and prior learning
- New questions that arise as a result of the learning or experience
- New actions taken as a result of the learning or experience

3rd Step: Organize content

The Borton, DEAL, and DIEP frameworks can help you consider how to organize your content. Remember that your reflection will generally include descriptive writing, followed by analysis and interpretation, followed by consideration of significance for

future action. That pattern might be developed once throughout a short piece or repeated several times in an academic reflective essay.

When writing an academic reflection essay (as opposed to a short reflection), you'll need to devise and support a thesis. That thesis should be an interpretive or evaluative claim, or series of claims, that moves beyond obvious statements (such as, "I really enjoyed this project") and demonstrates you have come to a deeper understanding of what you have learned and how you will use that learning. For example, the thesis below appeared in an end-of-semester reflection essay, written in response to an assignment asking students to consider their writing progress. Notice that the student makes a focused, interpretive claim that can be supported throughout her essay with evidence from her own writing.

Example

Throughout this class, I've learned that a skilled writer writes with a central focus in mind. Writing with a central focus results in a greater emphasis on the writer's message and brings about specificity and clarity within the writing piece.

A word about thesis placement: Because a reflection essay combines personal perception with academic convention, the thesis does not necessarily appear in the introduction. Many writers build to the thesis in the conclusion of their essays. You should place the thesis where it is most effective based on the essay's structure.

And speaking of structure, there is no one-size-fits-all organization pattern for an academic reflection essay. Some writers introduce the subject, follow the introduction with a series of reflections, and then move to an interpretive close. Others establish a chronology of events, weaving the implications of those events throughout. Still others articulate a series of major points, supporting those points with evidence. You should craft an organizational structure that best fits your distinctive ideas and observations.

However you choose to organize an academic reflection essay, you'll need to support your claims with evidence. Evidence is defined broadly in an academic reflection, so it might include such things as anecdotes, examples, relevant material from a course or outside sources, explanations of logic or decision-making, definitions, speculations, details, and other forms of non-traditional evidence. In the example below, notice how the writer uses her decision to limit the scope of a project as evidence to support her claim.

Example

Keeping a central focus in mind applies to multimodal compositions as well as written essays. A prime example of this was in my remix. When storyboarding for the video, I wanted to appeal to all college students in general. Within my compressed time limit of three minutes, I had planned to showcase numerous large points. It was too much. I decided to limit the scope of the topic to emphasize how digitally "addicted" Ole Miss college students are and that really changed the project in significant ways.

4th Step: Draft, Revise, Edit, Repeat

A single, unpolished draft may suffice for short, in-the-moment reflections. Longer academic reflection essays will require significant drafting, revising, and editing. Whatever the length of the assignment, keep this reflective cycle in mind:

- briefly describe the event or action;
- analyze and interpret events and actions, using evidence for support;
- demonstrate relevance in the present and the future.

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- Meme: Ask not what balance can do for you. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Fair Use

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3.9: Putting It Together- Reflection

Hopefully, you have learned a lot about reflection and how it is a vital component to your success as a college student. As you work your way through higher education, remember the following ideas:

- Reflection means exploring the “so what” rather than just the “what.”
- Consider the four knowledge types when you reflect: self-knowledge, content knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and critical knowledge or judgment.
- You can reflect meaningfully on past events, present events, or future events.
- Reflection happens across all academic disciplines and into your careers.
- Structure your reflective writing using the DEAL (Describe, Examine, Articulate Learning) or DIEP (Describe, Interpret, Evaluate, Plan) models.
- Strong reflective writing relies on a process, just like other writing tasks.

As you become more practiced at meaningful reflection, you should see the benefits in far more than just your academic work.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Expository Writing

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

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

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4.1: Compare and Contrast

The Purpose of Comparison and Contrast in Writing

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

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



Figure 4.1.1 Apples, Green and Red

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

Writing at Work

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

? Exercise 1

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

- Romantic comedies
- Internet search engines
- Cell phones

? Exercise 2

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

- Department stores and discount retail stores
- Fast food chains and fine dining restaurants
- Dogs and cats

The Structure of a Comparison-and-Contrast Essay

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

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

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

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

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

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



Figure 4.1.2 Organization Diagram

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

Table of Phrases of Comparison and Contrast

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

Writing at Work

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

? Exercise 3

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

? Exercise 4

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

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4.2: Comparison and Contrast Essays

Writing a Comparison-and-Contrast Essay

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

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

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

Sample Comparison-and-Contrast Essays

Comparing and Contrasting London and Washington, DC

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

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

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

Both cities also share and differ in cultural diversity and cost of living. Both cities share a very expensive cost of living—both in terms of housing and shopping. A downtown one-bedroom apartment in DC can easily cost $1,800 per month, and a similar "flat" in London may double that amount. These high costs create socioeconomic disparity among the residents. Although both cities' residents are predominantly wealthy, both have a significantly large population of poor and homeless. Perhaps the most significant difference between the resident demographics is the racial makeup. Washington, DC, is a "minority majority" city, which means the majority of its citizens are races other than white. In 2009, according to the US Census, 55 percent of DC residents were classified as "Black or African American" and 35 percent of its residents were classified as "white." London, by contrast, has very few

minorities—in 2006, 70 percent of its population was “white,” while only 10 percent was “black.” The racial demographic differences between the cities is drastic.

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

Sample Student Outline

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

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling

English 1101

Dr. Cox

16 March 2013

Outline

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

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

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

III. The characterization of Batman’s associates has changed to fit the changing expectations of a hero.
   A. In the Silver Age of comic books, Batman’s associates were correspondingly lighthearted.
      1. Characters like Ace the Bat-Hound, Bat-Mice, and Batwoman were created to draw in children.
      2. Issues were built around a villain-of-the-week.
   B. In modern portrayals, Batman’s associates deal with real consequences and changes.
      1. Dick Grayson grows up and goes to college.
      2. Batgirl is paralyzed by the Joker.

3. Joker is given several conflicting backstories explaining his psychosis.
4. Catwoman has changed from a harmless cat-burglar to a reformed prostitute.

Sample Student Essay

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling

English 1101

Dr. Cox

16 March 2013

Batman: A Hero for Any Time

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

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

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

Modern portrayals of Batman show him as a deeply flawed, psychologically scarred hero. During the 1980s the Comics Code's influence was waning, and writers like Frank Miller took advantage of this to tell brutal, psychological stories. Haunted by the murder of his parents, a modern Batman is dangerous and calculating. He has returned to his roots as a skilled detective and fighter, which has made him suspicious and paranoid. He is often depicted as having calculated how to defeat his allies, should the need arise, with contingency plans for everyone from Robin to Superman. Modern writers have a young Bruce Wayne train as a ninja before returning to Gotham to become Batman, so greater emphasis is placed on his stealth and fighting skills. The batsuit has

reflected this change as well, shifting from a cloth/spandex suit to one that is very clearly body armor, built to withstand bullets and knives.

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

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

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

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

External Links

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

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

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

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4.3: Cause and Effect

The Purpose of Cause and Effect in Writing

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

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

? Exercise 1

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

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

? Exercise 2

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

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

The Structure of a Cause-and-Effect Essay

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

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

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

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

Regardless of which structure you choose, be sure to explain each element of the essay fully and completely. Explaining complex relationships requires the full use of evidence, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and anecdotes. Be careful of resorting to empty speculation. In writing, speculation amounts to unsubstantiated guessing. Writers are particularly prone to such

trappings in cause-and-effect arguments due to the complex nature of finding links between phenomena. Be sure to have clear evidence to support the claims that you make.

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

Table of Phrases of Causation

as a result	consequently
because	due to
hence	since
thus	therefore

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

? Exercise 3

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

? Exercise 4

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

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4.4: Cause and Effect Essays

Writing a Cause-and-Effect Essay

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

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

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

Sample Cause-and-Effect Essay

Effects of Video Game Addiction

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

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

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

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

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

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

External Links

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

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

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

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4.5: Classification

The Purpose of Classification in Writing

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

? Exercise 1

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

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

The Structure of a Classification Essay

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

✔ Example 4.5.1:

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

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

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

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

? Exercise 2

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

Exercise 3

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

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4.6: Classification Essays

Writing a Classification Essay

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

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

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

Sample Classification Essay

Types of Higher Education Programs

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

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

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

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

Online universities are another type of higher education program that are gaining popularity as technology improves. These schools offer many of the same degree programs as traditional liberal arts colleges and universities. Unlike traditional programs, which require students to attend classes and lectures, online universities offer greater academic flexibility and are a great option for

students wishing to pursue a degree while still working full time. At online universities, students access course materials, such as video lectures and assessments, remotely using a personal computer and are able to speed up or slow down their progress to complete their degree at their own pace. Students may attend classes in the comfort of their own homes or local libraries, but students hoping for the social community of higher education might not enjoy this aspect of higher education.

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

External Link

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

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4.7: Process Analysis

The Purpose of the Process Essay

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

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

What is the difference between process instruction and process explanation?

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

Writing at Work

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

? Exercise 1

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

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

The Structure of a Process Essay

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

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

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

? Exercise 2

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

Exercise 3

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

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4.8: Process Essays

Writing a Process Essay

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

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

Sample Process Essays

How to Grow Tomatoes from a Seedling

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

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

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

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

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

Once you have the gravel in the bottom of the container and the soil on top, you are ready to transplant the tomato. Pick up the tomato in the plastic container it comes in from the nursery. Turn it upside down, and holding the stem between your fingers, pat the bottom lightly several times, and the plant should fall into your hand. Next, you should gently break up with your hands the root ball that formed in the nursery container. Be gentle, but be sure to rip them up a bit; this helps generate new root growth in the new container. Be careful not to damage the roots too much, as this could stunt the growth or even destroy the plant altogether.

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

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

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

Sample Student Outline

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

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling

English 1101

Dr. Cox

24 February 2013

Outline

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

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

II. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the availability of the yarn.
   A. Many people prefer to shop for yarn at a local yarn store.
      1. An advantage to shopping in person is the ability to touch the yarn.
      2. An advantage to shopping at the local yarn store is the knowledgeable staff, many of whom have been knitting for years.

3. An advantage to shopping at the yarn store is that the staff can provide ready assistance and often have first-hand knowledge of the yarn the knitter intends to use.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sample Student Essay

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling

English 1101

Dr. Cox

24 February 2013

Keep Them in Stitches

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

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

Once the type of yarn has been chosen, the knitter should consider what color yarn the recipient prefers. A solid color garment looks more professional and functions as a base piece in a wardrobe or interior design. Sweaters, iPad and tablet cases, as well as belts are well-suited to solid colors. Pieces made with variegated colors, in which the yarn has either multiple colors or shades of the same basic color, make for show pieces and accessories. Socks, gloves, scarves, and cowls are great projects for variegated yarn. Variegated yarn colors tend to keep the knitter's interest, but multicolored yarn can be difficult to use when working on larger projects which require multiple skeins of yarn. Due to the way yarn is dyed, the color at the end of one skein may not match the color at the beginning of the next skein.

The next step in determining the right yarn for a project is availability, particularly where to purchase the yarn. Some people prefer to shop at a local store for yarn because it offers many advantages. Shopping in person allows the knitter to feel the yarn he or she intends to purchase. This can help sway the knitter's opinion in regards to yarn choice. The staff at a local shop is often knowledgeable; many of them have been knitting for years, and they are usually ready to offer assistance with projects or yarn

selection. If a knitter does not live near a yarn store, there are many online retailers who can fulfill their orders. Online retailers typically have a larger selection of yarns and patterns available for download. Since they cannot give personal assistance, many compensate for this deficiency by providing free tutorial videos.

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

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

External Links

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

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

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4.9: Definition

The Purpose of Definition in Writing

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

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

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

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

Writing at Work

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

? Exercise 1

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

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

The Structure of a Definition Essay

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

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

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

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

Parts of a definition:

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

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

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

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

Writing at Work

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

? Exercise 2

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

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

? Exercise 3

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

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4.10: Definition Essays

Writing a Definition Essay

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

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

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

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

Some Additional Tips About Definition

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

Sample Definition Essays

Defining Good Students Means More Than Just Grades

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

Good students have a passion for learning that drives them to fully understand class material rather than just worry about what grades they receive in the course. Good students are actively engaged in scholarship, which means they enjoy reading and learning about their subject matter not just because readings and assignments are required. Of course, good students will complete their homework and all assignments, and they may even continue to perform research and learn more on the subject after the course

ends. In some cases, good students will pursue a subject that interests them but might not be one of their strongest academic areas, so they will not earn the highest grades. Pushing oneself to learn and try new things can be difficult, but good students will challenge themselves rather than remain at their educational comfort level for the sake of a high grade. The pursuit of scholarship and education rather than concern over grades is the hallmark of a good student.

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

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

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

Sample Student Essay

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

Darius Porter

English 1101

Dr. Jones

September 24, 2015

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The U.S. Constitution states that all citizens are entitled to equal protection under the law. The reality though, is that the accused lower income citizen will experience the justice system differently than the accused higher income citizen. A wealthier citizen will have more money to pay for a better, more experienced, lawyer which is important because your lawyer is the person who is most important in defending you against the charges brought against you. In many instances, a person of a lower income bracket cannot afford a lawyer, so they are forced to continue the judicial process with a public defender. A public defender is an appointed lawyer who is provided by, and works for, the courts. It is widely argued that public defenders are on the side of the prosecutors. Regardless of the fact, "Statistically, trolling for low-level law breakers has distracted the public from demanding justice where it is most needed," (DeRoche). Your income will determine your experience in the justice system. People of a lower social classification may not get the protection under the law, which is needed so that the corruption will not continue.

When the crime rate and the incarceration rate are rising simultaneously, it is apparent that the United States criminal justice system is not very effective. In conclusion, DeRoche states, "Beyond the dollars spent, our failing criminal justice system contributes to

our cultural decline.” A true justice system is one that lowers the crime rate by punishing criminals while promoting equality, fairness, and rehabilitation skills. Robbing individuals of their freedom through record levels of mass incarceration results in a billion dollar prison industry, mandatory sentencing, and racial and low income targeting. Higher convictions rates will not solve the problem, only criminal justice reform will.

External Links

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

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

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Rhetorical Analysis

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

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

5.1: Critical Thinking
5.2: The Art of Rhetoric
5.3: What is Rhetorical Situation?
5.4: Classical Rhetoric
5.5: Rhetorical Appeals- Logos, Pathos, and Ethos Defined
5.6: Rhetorical Analysis
5.7: What are the Basic Elements of Rhetorical Analysis?
5.8: Visual Analysis in Composition and Rhetoric and Literature
5.9: Writing a Visual Analysis
5.10: Striking a Balance
5.11: Rhetorical Fallacies
5.12: Module- Rhetorical Appeals
- 5.12.1: Kairos and Pathos
- 5.12.2: Introduction to Ethos
- 5.12.3: Appeals to Ethos
- 5.12.4: Manipulative Appeals to Ethos
- 5.12.5: Establishing Ethos
- 5.12.6: Putting It Together- Rhetorical Appeals
- 5.12.7: Why It Matters- Rhetorical Appeals
- 5.12.8: Introduction to Logos
- 5.12.9: Appeals to Logos
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- 5.12.11: Manipulative Appeals to Logos
- 5.12.12: Kairos and Logos
- 5.12.13: Introduction to Pathos
- 5.12.14: Appeals to Pathos
- 5.12.15: Manipulative Appeals to Pathos

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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 5.1.1: (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.

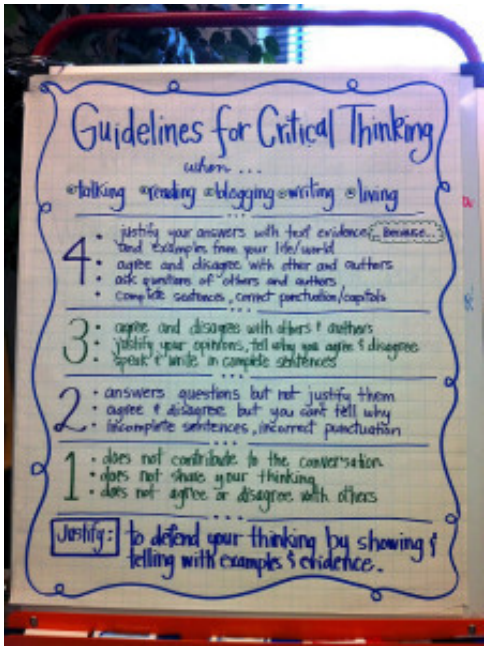


Figure 5.1.2:

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.



Video 5.1.1: Critical Thinking.wmv. Authored by: Lawrence Bland. A*ll 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[2]
1	Define the problem	• Identify the problem • Provide as many supporting details as possible • Provide examples • Organize the information logically
2	Identify available solutions	• Use logic to identify your most important goals • Identify implications and consequences • Identify facts • Compare and contrast possible solutions
3	Select your solution	• Use gathered facts and relevant evidence • Support and defend solutions considered valid • Defend your solution

The following video demonstrates problem solving in our personal lives.



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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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.

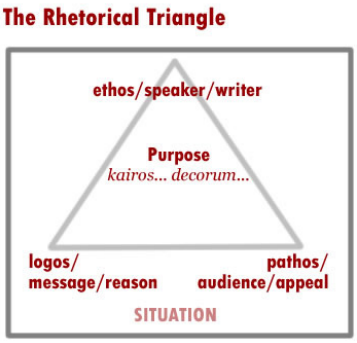
The following video focuses on the use of rhetoric from the viewpoint as a writer. As you watch, consider how the same elements hold true from the viewpoint of a reader.



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.



Video 5.2.1

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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5.3: What is Rhetorical Situation?

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

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

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

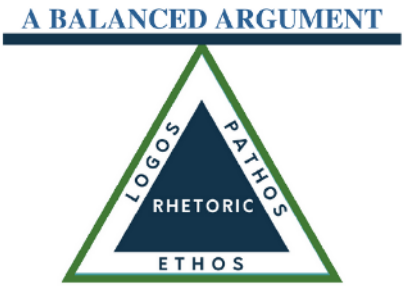


Figure 5.3.2 A Balanced Argument

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5.4: Classical Rhetoric

In James Murphy's translation of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, he explains that "Education for Quintilian begins in the cradle, and ends only when life itself ends."[1] The result of a life of learning, for Quintilian, is a perfect speech where "the student is given a statement of a problem and asked to prepare an appropriate speech giving his solution."[2] In this version of the world, a good citizen is always a PUBLIC participant. This forces the good citizen to know the rigors of public argumentation: "Rhetoric, or the theory of effective communication, is for Quintilian merely the tool of the broadly educated citizen who is capable of analysis, reflection, and powerful action in public affairs."[3] For Quintilian, learning to argue in public is a lifelong affair. He believed that the "perfect orator. . . cannot exist unless he is above all a good man."[4] Whether we agree with this or not, the hope for ethical behavior has been a part of public argumentation from the beginning.

The ancient model of rhetoric (or public argumentation) is complex. As a matter of fact, there is no single model of ancient argumentation. Plato claimed that the Sophists, such as Gorgias, were spin doctors weaving opinion and untruth for the delight of an audience and to the detriment of their moral fiber. For Plato, at least in the *Phaedrus*, public conversation was only useful if one applied it to the search for truth.[5] In the last decade, the work of the Sophists has been redeemed. Rather than spin doctors, Sophists like Isocrates, and even Gorgias to some degree, are viewed as arbiters of democracy because they believed that many people, not just male, property holding, Athenian citizens, could learn to use rhetoric effectively in public.

Aristotle gives us a slightly more systematic approach. He is very concerned with logic. For this reason, much of what is discussed below comes from his work. Aristotle explains that most men participate in public argument in some fashion. It is important to note that by "men," Aristotle means citizens of Athens: adult males with the right to vote, not including women, foreigners, or slaves. Essentially this is a homogenous group by race, gender, and religious affiliation. We have to keep this in mind when adapting these strategies to our current heterogeneous culture. Aristotle explains,

> for to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others. Ordinary people do this either at random or through practice and from acquired habit. Both ways being possible, the subject can plainly be handled systematically, for it is possible to inquire the reason why some speakers succeed through practice and others spontaneously; and every one will at once agree that such an inquiry is the function of an art. [6]

For Aristotle, inquiry into this field was artistic in nature. It required both skill and practice (some needed more of one than the other). Important here is the notion that public argument can be systematically learned.

Aristotle did not dwell on the ethics of an argument in Rhetoric (he leaves this to other texts). He argued that "things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites" and finally that "things that are true and things that are better are, by their nature, practically always easier to prove and easier to believe in."[7] As a culture, we are skeptical of this kind of position, though often most believe it on a personal level. Aristotle admits in the next line that there are people who will use their skills at rhetoric for harm. As his job in this section is to defend the use of rhetoric itself, he claims that everything good can be used for harm, so rhetoric is no different from other fields. If this is true, there is even more need to educate the citizenry so that they will not be fooled by unethical and untruthful arguments.

For many, logic simply means reasoning. To understand a person's logic, we try to find the structure of their reasoning. Logic is not synonymous with fact or truth, though facts are part of evidence in logical argumentation. You can be logical without being truthful. This is why more logic is not the only answer to better public argument.

Our human brains are compelled to categorize the world as a survival mechanism. This survival mechanism allows for quicker thought. Two of the most basic logical strategies include inductive and deductive reasoning. ***Deductive reasoning*** (see Figure 3.5.1)[8] starts from a premise that is a generalization about a large class of ideas, people, etc. and moves to a specific conclusion about a smaller category of ideas or things (All cats hate water; therefore, my neighbor's cat will not jump in our pool). While the first premise is the most general, the second premise is a more particular observation. So the argument is created through common beliefs/observations that are compared to create an argument.

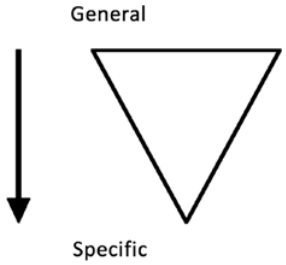


Figure 3.5.1: Deductive Reasoning

For example:

- **Major Premise:** People who burn flags are unpatriotic.
- **Minor Premise:** Sara burned a flag.
- **Conclusion:** Sara is unpatriotic.

The above line of logic is called a syllogism. As we can see in the example, the major premise offers a general belief held by some groups and the minor premise is a particular observation. The conclusion is drawn by comparing the premises and developing a conclusion. If you work hard enough, you can often take a complex argument and boil it down to a syllogism. This can reveal a great deal about the argument that is not apparent in the longer more complex version.

Stanley Fish, professor and *New York Times* columnist, offers the following syllogism in his July 22, 2007, blog entry titled "Democracy and Education": "The syllogism underlying these comments is (1) America is a democracy (2) Schools and universities are situated within that democracy (3) Therefore schools and universities should be ordered and administrated according to democratic principles."[9]

Fish offered the syllogism as a way to summarize the responses to his argument that students do not, in fact, have the right to free speech in a university classroom. The responses to Fish's standpoint were vehemently opposed to his understanding of free speech rights and democracy. The responses are varied and complex. However, boiling them down to a single syllogism helps to summarize the primary rebuttal so that Fish could then offer his extended version of his standpoint.

Inductive reasoning moves in a different direction than deductive reasoning (see Figure 3.5.2[10] below). Inductive reasoning starts with a particular or local statement and moves to a more general conclusion. We can think of inductive reasoning as a stacking of evidence. The more particular examples you give, the more it seems that your conclusion is correct.

Inductive reasoning is a common method for arguing, especially when the conclusion is an obvious probability. Inductive reasoning is the most common way that we move around in the world. If we experience something habitually, we reason that it will happen again. For example, if we walk down a city street and every person smiles, we might reason that this is a "nice town." This seems logical. We have taken many similar, particular experiences (smiles) and used them to make a general conclusion (the people in the town are nice).

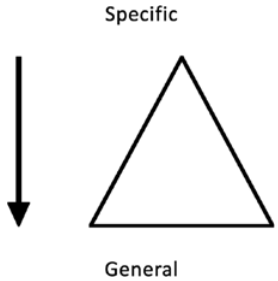


Figure 3.5.2: Inductive Reasoning

Most of the time, this reasoning works. However, we know that it can also lead us in the wrong direction. Perhaps the people were smiling because we were wearing inappropriate clothing (country togs in a metropolitan city), or perhaps only the people living on that particular street are "nice" and the rest of the town is unfriendly. Research papers sometimes rely too heavily on this logical method. Writers assume that finding ten versions of the same argument somehow proves that the point is true.

Most academic arguments in the humanities are inductive to some degree. When you study humanity, nothing is certain. When observing or making inductive arguments, it is important to get your evidence from many different areas, to judge it carefully, and

acknowledge the flaws. Inductive arguments must be judged by the quality of the evidence since the conclusions are drawn directly from a body of compiled work.

The Appeals

"The appeals" offer a lesson in rhetoric that sticks with you long after the class has ended. Perhaps it is the rhythmic quality of the words (ethos, logos, pathos) or, simply, the usefulness of the concept. Aristotle imagined logos, ethos, and pathos as three kinds of artistic proof. Essentially, they highlight three ways to appeal to or persuade an audience: "(1) to reason logically, (2) to understand human character and goodness in its various forms, (3) to understand emotions."[11]

While Aristotle and others did not explicitly dismiss emotional and character appeals, they found the most value in logic. Contemporary rhetoricians and argumentation scholars, however, recognize the power of emotions to sway us. Even the most stoic individuals have some emotional threshold over which no logic can pass. For example, we can seldom be reasonable when faced with a crime against a loved one, a betrayal, or the face of an adorable baby.

The easiest way to differentiate the appeals is to imagine selling a product based on them. Until recently, car commercials offered a prolific source of logical, ethical, and emotional appeals.

Logos

Using logic as proof for an argument. For many students this takes the form of numerical evidence. But as we have discussed above, logical reasoning is a kind of argumentation.

Example of Logos

Car Commercial: (Syllogism) Americans love adventure—Ford Escape allows for off road adventure— Americans should buy a Ford Escape.

OR

The Ford Escape offers the best financial deal.

Ethos

Calling on particular shared values (patriotism), respected figures of authority (MLK), or one's own character as a method for appealing to an audience.

Example of Ethos

Car Commercial: Eco-conscious Americans drive a Ford Escape.

OR

[Insert favorite movie star] drives a Ford Escape.

Pathos

Using emotionally driven images or language to sway your audience.

Example of Pathos

Car Commercial: Images of a pregnant woman being safely rushed to a hospital. Flash to two car seats in the back seat. Flash to family hopping out of their Ford Escape and witnessing the majesty of the Grand Canyon.

OR

After an image of a worried mother watching her sixteen year old daughter drive away: "Ford Escape takes the fear out of driving."

The appeals are part of everyday conversation, even if we do not use the Greek terminology. Understanding the appeals helps us to make better rhetorical choices in designing our arguments. If you think about the appeals as a choice, their value is clear.[12]

Practice Activity

The original version of this chapter contained H5P content. You may want to remove or replace this element.

This section contains material from:

Jones, Rebecca. “Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?” In *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 1*, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, 156-179. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2010. https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=243. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License.

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1. James Murphy, *Quintilian On the Teaching and Speaking of Writing* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987), xxi. ↵
2. Murphy, *Quintilian On the Teaching and Speaking of Writing*, xxiii. ↵
3. Murphy, *Quintilian On the Teaching and Speaking of Writing*, xxvii. ↵
4. Murphy, *Quintilian On the Teaching and Speaking of Writing*, 6. ↵
5. Plato, “The Dialogues of Plato, vol. 1 [387 AD],” Online Library of Liberty, n.d., accessed May 5, 2010. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=111&layout=html#chapter_39482>. ↵
6. Lee Honeycutt, “Aristotle’s Rhetoric: A Hypertextual Resource Compiled by Lee Honeycutt,” June 21, 2004, accessed May 5, 2010, 1354a I i. ↵
7. Honeycutt, “Aristotle’s Rhetoric," 1355a I i. ↵
8. “Deductive Reasoning” by Rebecca Jones is in: Rebecca Jones, “Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?,” in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 1*, eds. Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky (West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2010), 156-179, https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=243. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License. ↵
9. Stanley Fish, “Democracy and Education,” *New York Times*, July 22, 2007, accessed May 5, 2010. ↵
10. “Inductive Reasoning” by Rebecca Jones is in: Rebecca Jones, “Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?,” in Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 1, eds. Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky (West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2010), 156-179, https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=243. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License. ↵
11. Lee Honeycutt, “Aristotle’s Rhetoric: A Hypertextual Resource Compiled by Lee Honeycutt,” June 21, 2004, accessed May 5, 2010, 1356a. ↵
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5.5: Rhetorical Appeals- Logos, Pathos, and Ethos Defined

Rhetoric, as the previous sections have discussed, is the way that authors use and manipulate language in order to persuade an audience. Once we understand the rhetorical situation out of which a text is created (why it was written, for whom it was written, by whom it was written, how the medium in which it was written creates certain constraints, or perhaps freedom of expression), we can look at how all of those contextual elements shape the author's creation of the text.

We can look first at the classical rhetorical appeals which are the three ways to classify an author's intellectual, moral, and emotional approaches to getting the audience to react in the manner in which the author may have intended.

Rhetorical Appeals

In composition studies, the term rhetorical appeals refers to the use of ethos, pathos, and logos. These are classical Greek terms dating back to Aristotle who is traditionally viewed as the creator of rhetoric. To be rhetorically effective (and thus persuasive), an author must engage the audience in a variety of compelling ways which involves carefully choosing how to craft their argument so that the intended outcome is achieved. Often that outcome occurs when the audience agrees with the argument or point being presented. Aristotle defined these modes of engagement and gave them the terms that we still use today: logos, pathos, and ethos.

Logos: Appeal to Logic

Logic. Reason. Rationality. Logos is brainy and intellectual, cool, calm, collected, objective.

When an author relies on logos, it means that they are using logic, careful structure, and objective evidence to appeal to the audience. Objective evidence is anything that can be proven with statistics or other facts via more than one source. Oftentimes that evidence has been validated by more than one authority in the field of study.

For example, if Dr. Smith was trying to convince her students to complete their homework, she might explain that she understands everyone is busy and they have other classes (non-biased), but that completing their homework will help them get a better grade on their test (explanation). She could add to this explanation by providing statistics showing the number of students who failed and didn't complete their homework versus the number of students who passed and did complete their homework (factual evidence). This is an example of logos employed for the purposes of argument and persuasion.

Logical appeals rest on rational modes of thinking**,** such as:

- **Comparison:** a comparison between one thing (with regard to your topic) and another, similar thing to help support your claim. It is important that the comparison is fair and valid – the things being compared must share significant traits of similarity.
- **Cause/effect thinking:** you argue that X has caused Y, or that X is likely to cause Y to help support your claim. Be careful with the latter – it can be difficult to predict that something "will" happen in the future.
- **Deductive reasoning:** starting with a broad, general claim/example and using it to support a more specific point or claim (picture an hourglass where the sands gather in the middle)
- **Inductive reasoning:** using several specific examples or cases to make a broad generalization (consider the old question of "if your friend jumped off of a bridge, would you" to make the sweeping claim that all young people are easily persuaded to follow the crowd)
- **Analogical reasoning:** moves from one particular claim/example to another, seemingly sequential (sometimes this line of reasoning is used to make a guilt by association claim)
- **Exemplification:** use of many examples or a variety of evidence to support a single point
- **Elaboration:** moving beyond just including a fact, but explaining the significance or relevance of that fact
- **Coherent thought:** maintaining a well-organized line of reasoning; not repeating ideas or jumping around

Pathos: Appeal to Emotions

When an author relies on pathos, it means that they are trying to tap into the audience's emotions to get them to agree with the author's claim. An author using pathos appeals wants the audience to feel something: anger, pride, joy, rage, or happiness. For example, many of us have seen the ASPCA commercials that use photographs of injured puppies, or sad-looking kittens, and slow, depressing music to emotionally persuade their audience to donate money. This is a classic example of the use of pathos in argument.

Pathos-based rhetorical strategies are any strategies that get the audience to "open up" to the topic, the argument, or to the author through an emotional connection. Emotions can make us vulnerable and an author can use this vulnerability to get the audience to believe that their argument is a compelling one.

Pathos appeals might include:

- Expressive descriptions of people, places, or events that help the reader to feel or experience those events
- Vivid imagery of people, places or events that help the reader to feel like they are seeing those events
- Sharing personal stories that make the reader feel a connection to, or empathy for, the person being described
- Using emotion-laden vocabulary as a way to put the reader into that specific emotional mindset (what is the author trying to make the audience feel? and how are they doing that?)
- Using any information that will evoke an emotional response from the audience. This could involve making the audience feel empathy or disgust for the person/group/event being discussed, or perhaps connection to or rejection of the person/group/event being discussed.

When reading a text, try to locate where the author is trying to convince the reader by strictly using emotions because, if used to excess, pathos appeals can indicate a lack of substance or emotional manipulation of the audience. If the only way in which an author can persuade the reader is by making him/her sad or angry, does that make for a solid, valid argument?

Ethos: Appeal to Values/Trust

Appeals using ethos are typically two faceted focusing on audience values and authorial credibility/character.

On the one hand, when an author makes an ethical appeal, they are attempting to *tap into thevalues or ideologies that the audience holds.* Examples include patriotism, tradition, justice, equality, dignity for all humankind, self-preservation, or other specific social, religious or philosophical values (Christian values, socialism, capitalism, feminism, etc.). These values can sometimes feel very close to emotions, but they are felt on a social level rather than only on a personal level. When an author evokes the values that the audience cares about as a way to justify or support their argument, we classify that as ethos. The audience will feel that the author is making an argument that is "right" (in the sense of moral "right"-ness, i.e., *My argument rests upon the values that matter to you. Therefore, you should accept my argument*). This first part of the definition of ethos, then, is focused on the audience's values.

On the other hand, this sense of referencing what is "right" in an ethical appeal connects to the other sense of ethos, the author. Ethos that is centered on the author revolves around two concepts: the credibility of the author and their character.

Credibility of the speaker/author is determined by their knowledge and expertise in the subject at hand. For example, if you are learning about Einstein's Theory of Relativity, would you rather learn from a professor of physics or a cousin who took two science classes in high school thirty years ago? It is fair to say that, in general, the professor of physics would have more credibility to discuss the topic of physics than your cousin. To establish their credibility, an author may draw attention to who they are or what kinds of experience they have with the topic being discussed as an ethical appeal (i.e., *Because I have experience with this topic – and I know my stuff! – you should trust what I am saying about this topic*). Some authors do not have to establish their credibility because the audience already knows who they are and that they are credible.

Character is another aspect of ethos that is different from credibility because it involves personal history and sometimes personality traits. A person can be credible but lack character or vice versa. For example, in politics, sometimes the most experienced candidates – those who might be the most credible candidates – fail to win elections because voters do not accept their character. Politicians take pains to shape their character as leaders who have the interests of the voters at heart. The candidate who successfully proves to the voters (the audience) that they have the type of character that they can trust is more likely to win.

Thus, ethos comes down to trust. How can the author get the audience to trust him or her so that they will accept their argument? How can the author make himself or herself appear as a credible speaker who embodies the character traits that the audience values?

In building ethical appeals, we may see authors:

- Referring either directly or indirectly to the values that matter to the intended audience (so that the audience will trust the speaker)

- Using language, phrasing, imagery, or other writing styles common to people who hold those values, thereby "talking the talk" of people with those values (again, so that the audience is inclined to trust the speaker)
- Referring to their experience and/or authority with the topic (and therefore demonstrating their credibility)
- Referring to their own character, or making an effort to build their character in the text

When reading, you should always think about the author's credibility regarding the subject as well as their character. Here is an example of a rhetorical move that connects with ethos: when reading an article about abortion, the author mentions that she has had an abortion. That is an example of an ethical move because the author is creating credibility via anecdotal evidence and first person narrative. In a rhetorical analysis project, it would be up to you, the analyzer, to point out this move and associate it with a rhetorical strategy.

When Writers Misuse Logos, Pathos, or Ethos, Arguments can be Weakened

Above, we defined and described what logos, pathos, and ethos are and why authors may use those strategies. Sometimes, using a combination of appeals leads to a sound, balanced, and persuasive argument. It is important to understand, though, that using rhetorical appeals does not always lead to a sound, balanced argument. In fact, any of the appeals could be misused or overused. When that happens, arguments can be weakened.

? *Exercise*

Using a social media platform, find a topic that is trending for today and create an argument using ethos, pathos, and logos for that topic.

Practice Activity

The original version of this chapter contained H5P content. You may want to remove or replace this element.

This section contains material from:

Gagich, Melanie and Emilie Zickel. "Rhetorical Appeals: Logos, Pathos, and Ethos Defined." In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/rhetorical-strategies-building-compelling-arguments/ Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

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5.6: Rhetorical Analysis

Overview of Rhetorical Analysis

A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS REFERS TO THE PROCESS OF ANALYZING A TEXT, GIVEN SOURCE OR ARTIFACT. The text, source, or artifact may be in written form or in some different sort of communication. The goal of a rhetorical analysis is to take into consideration the purpose, audience, genre, stance, and media/design of the given rhetorical situation. In other words, the analysis explores not only what everything means in the given source (content), but also why the author wrote about it (the purpose), who the author is (background), how the piece was organized (structure), where and/or when it was published (forum), and the intended message conveyed to the audience (topic).

A rhetorical analysis is one of the more challenging assignments in any writing class. Students often confuse a rhetorical analysis with a review because both assignments work to analyze a text. However, a rhetorical analysis reserves judgment on whether they agree/disagree with the topic presented. A review, of course, invites the reviewer to critique how "good" or "bad" the content of the text is. The **PROCESS** of completing a rhetorical analysis requires the use of different rhetorical strategies. These strategies are: critical reading, strategies for effective communication, persuasive appeals, argumentation, and avoidance of logical fallacies. These specific strategies are discussed in depth throughout the remainder of this page.

The **PURPOSE** of a rhetorical analysis is to engage in critical thinking with the intention of effectively communicating an intended message to a predetermined audience. In order to successfully determine the intended message of a particular text a good question to guide your analysis is: how did the author craft his/her argument?

Rhetoric is a term that is widely used in many forms, and by itself can mean a great many things. Some use the term in association with political rhetoric, to name the voice and stance, as well as the language that becomes the nature of politics. Rhetoric can be thought of as the way in which you phrase what you are saying, and the forces that impact what you are saying. At its very core **RHETORIC IS THE ABILITY TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE AN INTENDED MESSAGE**, whether it is via argumentation, persuasion, or another form of communication.

Critical Reading

Critical reading is the first step in a rhetorical analysis. In order to make a reasonable and logical analysis, you need to apply critical reading skills to a text, given source, or artifact that you intend on analyzing. For example, when reading, you can break the whole text down into several parts. Then, try to determine what the writer is attempting to achieve with the message they are conveying to a predetermined audience; then work to identify the writing strategies s/he is using. Once the text, artifact or given source has been thoroughly analyzed you can determine whether the intended message was effectively communicated.

Reading critically does not simply mean being moved, affected, informed, influenced, and persuaded by a piece of writing; it is much more than that. It refers to analyzing and understanding of how the writing has achieved its effect on the audience. Some specific questions can guide you in your critical reading process. You can use them in reading the text, and if asked to, you can use them in writing a formal analysis. In terms of engaging in critical reading, it is important to begin with broad questions and then work towards asking more specific questions, but in the end the purpose of engaging in critical reading is so that as an analyzer you are asking questions that work to develop the purpose of the artifact, text, or given source you are choosing to analyze.

The following is a list of suggested questions that you may find useful for when you engage in critical reading. However, you do not need to apply all of these questions to every text, artifact, or given source. Rather, you may use them selectively according to the specific reading at hand. The main questions listed below are considered to be broad in nature; with the questions listed via bullet points underneath the broad questions are meant to get at more the specific details of the intended message. Please remember that this is simply one method for getting you started on reading (and then writing) more critically.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN ENGAGING IN CRITICAL READING:

What is the subject?

- Does the subject bring up any personal associations? Is it a controversial one?

What is the thesis (the overall main point)?

- How does the thesis interpret the subject? If asked, could you summarize the main idea?

Who is the intended audience?

- What values and/or beliefs do they hold that the writer could appeal to?

What is the tone of the text?

- What is your reaction to the text, emotional or rational (think of pathos)? Does this reaction change at all throughout the text?

What is the writer's purpose?

- To explain? Inform? Anger? Persuade? Amuse? Motivate? Sadden? Ridicule? Attack? Defend?
- Is there more than one purpose? Does the purpose shift at all throughout the text?

What methods does the writer use to develop his/her ideas?

- Narration? Description? Definition? Comparison? Analogy? Cause and Effect? Example?
- Why does the writer use these methods? Do these methods help in his/her development of ideas?

What pattern does the author use for the arrangement of ideas?

- Particular to general, broad to specific, spatial, chronological, alternating, or block?
- Does the format enhance or detract from the content? Does it help the piece along or distract from it?

Does the writer use adequate transitions to make the text unified and coherent?

- Do you think the transitions work well? In what ways do they work well?

Are there any patterns in the sentence structure that make the writer's purpose clear to you?

- What are these patterns like if there are some? Does the writer use any fragments or run-on sentences?

Is there any dialog and/or quotations used in the text?

- To what effect? For what purpose is this dialog or quotations used?

In what way does the writer use diction?

- Is the language emotionally evocative? Does the language change throughout the piece? How does the language contribute to the writer's aim?

Is there anything unusual in the writer's use of punctuation?

- What punctuation or other techniques of emphasis (italics, capitals, underlining, ellipses, parentheses) does the writer use?
- Is punctuation over- or under-used? Which marks does the writer use where, and to what effect?

Are there any repetitions of important terms throughout the text?

- Are these repetitions effective, or do they detract from the text?

Does the writer present any particularly vivid images that stand out?

- What is the effect of these images on the writer's purpose?

Are there any tropes--similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole, comparisons, contrasts, etc. that are employed by the writer?

- When does he/she use them? For what reason(s)? Are those devices used to convey or enhance meaning?

Are there any other devices such as humor, wordplay, irony, sarcasm, understatement, or parody that are used in the text?

- Is the effect comic relief? Pleasure? Hysteria? Ridicule?

Is there any information about the background of the writer?

- Is the writer an acceptable authority on the subject? How do you know?

Basic Rhetorical Strategies for Effective Communication

After engaging in a critical analysis or reading of your intended artifact, text, or given source, the next step in the process of completing an effective rhetorical analysis is to discuss your discoveries. For the purposes of writing, when we refer to rhetoric, we often talk about it as the art of persuasion or the ability to communicate effectively. There are many different strategies a communicator may employ to effectively communicate his/her message to his/her intended audience. While the rhetorical strategies for effective communication are discussed in terms of writing about your findings, pertaining to your rhetorical analysis, it should be noted that these rhetorical strategies can be employed during the critical analysis or reading portion of your rhetorical analysis project.

Below is a table that breaks down some rhetorical strategies, what they mean, and how to analyze them critically. This table can be used when rhetorically analyzing a text or artifact or when you begin the process of writing about your findings. The purpose of this table is to provide a breakdown of rhetorical strategies and how one can identify them in a message.

STRATEGY	DEFINITION	QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL THINKING
EXEMPLIFICATION	Provide examples or cases in point	Are there examples -- facts, statistics, cases in point, personal experiences, interview quotations -- added to the essay?
DESCRIPTION	Detail sensory perceptions of a person, place, or thing	Does a person, place, or object play a prominent role in the essay?
NARRATION	Recount an event	Are there any anecdotes, experiences, or stories in the essay?
PROCESS ANALYSIS	Explain how to do something or how something happens	Does any portion of the essay include concrete directions about a certain process?
COMPARISON AND CONTRAST	Discuss similarities and differences	Does the essay contain two or more related subjects? Does it evaluate or analyze two or more people, places, processes, events, or things? Are there any similarities and/or differences between two or more elements?
DIVISION AND CLASSIFICATION	Divide a whole into parts or sort related items into categories	Does the essay reduce the subject to more manageable parts or group parts?
DEFINITION	Provide the meaning of terms you use	Is there any important word in the essay with many meanings and is defined or clarified?
CAUSE AND EFFECT ANALYSIS	Analyze why something happens and describe the consequences of a string of events	Does the essay examine past events or their outcome? Does it explain why something happened?
REPETITION	The constant use of certain words	Why, with all words at her disposal, does the writer choose to repeat particular words?

STRATEGY	DEFINITION	QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL THINKING
COUNTERPOINTS	Contrasting ideas such as black/white, darkness/light, good/bad	Does the writer acknowledge and respond to counterpoints to her position?
IMAGERY	Language that evokes one or all of the five senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, smell	Does the essay use any provocative language that calls upon readers' senses?
METAPHOR AND SIMILE	A figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, often in a phrase introduced by "like" or "as"	Does the essay make connections between things to make a point or elicit an idea?
STYLE, TONE, AND VOICE	The attitude a writer takes towards a subject or character: serious, humorous, sarcastic, ironic, satirical, tongue-in-cheek, solemn, objective	What tone does the essay have? How does the writer portray herself? What choices does she make that influence her position?
ANALOGY	The comparison of two pairs that have the same relationship	Are there any comparisons made by the writer to strengthen her message?
FLASHBACK	A memory of an event in the past	
HYPERBOLE	Exaggeration or overstatement	Does the writer make any claims that seem extreme?
PERSONIFICATION	Giving human qualities to animals or objects	Is something without conscience thinking or talking?
IRONY	An expression or utterance marked by deliberate contrast between apparent and intended meaning, often humorous	Does the writer really support her own assertions? Does she seem to be claiming the opposite you expect her to claim?
OXYMORON	A contradiction in terms such as "faithless devotion," "searing cold," "deafening silence," "virtual reality," "act naturally," "peacekeeper missile," or "larger half"	Do any of the writer's terms seem to obviously clash?
PARADOX	Reveals a kind of truth which at first seems contradictory; Red wine is both good and bad for us	Do any contradictions used in the essay contain some grain of truth?
PARODY	An exaggerated imitation of a style, person, or genre for humorous effect.	Do any contradictions used in the essay contain some grain of truth?
SYMBOLISM	Using an object or action that means something more than its literal meaning; A skull and crossbones symbolize death	Does the writer seem to assert that a thing has meaning outside of the obvious?
SATIRE	Literary tone used to ridicule or make fun of human vice or weakness, often with the intent of correcting, or changing, the subject of the satiric attack	Does the writer's humor aim to fix its target?
DICTION	An author's choice of words	Why, with all words at her disposal, does the writer choose to use those particular words?
PARALLELISM	The use of identical or equivalent constructions in corresponding clauses	Are there any syntactic similarities between two parts of a sentence?

Persuasive Appeals

The persuasive appeals, or what could also be known as the rhetorical triangle, were developed by Aristotle to ensure effective communication, and are a cornerstone within the field of Rhetoric and Writing. It is common to see the three persuasive appeals depicted as the points of a triangle because like the points of triangle they each play a role in the ability to hold the message together. Aristotle was a Greek philosopher that believed all three of these rhetorical appeals were needed to effectively communicate an intended message to a pre-determined audience. Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals are: Logos, Ethos, and Pathos; they are discussed in detail throughout the remainder of this section.

LOGOS

Logos is most easily defined as the logical appeal of an argument. It relies on logic or reason and depends on deductive and/or inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning begins with a generalization and then applies it to a specific case. The generalization you start with must be based on a sufficient amount of reliable evidence. Inductive reasoning takes a specific representative case, or facts, and then draws generalizations or conclusions from them. Inductive reasoning must be based on a sufficient amount of reliable evidence. In other words, the facts you draw on must fairly represent the larger situation or population. Both deductive and inductive reasoning are discussed more in depth further down on this page.

Example of Logos: Say that you are writing a paper on immigration and you say "55,000 illegal immigrants entered this country last year, of those, only 23,000 did it legally." There is obviously something wrong here. Although saying 55,000 immigrants were "illegal" makes for an impressive statistic, it is apparently not correct if you admit that 23,000 of these people immigrated legally. The actual number of illegal immigrants would then be only 32,000, a significantly lower number. The purpose of this example is to demonstrate how having logical progression to an argument is essential in effectively communicating your intended message.

ETHOS

Ethos is the appeal to ethics, the use of authority to persuade an audience to believe in their character. And while ethos is called an ethical appeal, be careful not to confuse it solely with ethics; it encompasses a large number of different things which can include what a person wears, says, the words they use, their tone, their credentials, their experience, their charge over the audience, verbal and nonverbal behavior, criminal records, etc. Ethos gives the author credibility. It is important to build credibility with your audience because without it, readers are less inclined to trust you or accept the argument presented to them. Using credible sources is one method of building credibility. A certain amount of ethos may be implied solely from the author's reputation, but a writer should not rely only on reputation to prop up his/her work. A sure way to damage your ethos is by attacking or insulting an opponent or opposing viewpoint. The most effective ethos should develop from what is said, whether it is in spoken or written form. The most persuasive rhetoricians are the ones that understand this concept.

Example of Ethos: To elaborate, the construction of authority is reflected in how the rhetorician presents herself, what diction she uses, how she phrases her ideas, what other authorities she refers to, how she composes herself under stress, her experience within the context of her message, her personal or academic background, and more. In academia, ethos can be constructed not only by diction, tone, phrasing, and the like, but by what the rhetorician knows. A works cited page reflects this. It says: this author has read these sources, and knows their contents. And if those sources are relevant, reputable, and well regarded, the author has just benefited from that association. At the same time, authors want to make sure they properly introduce their sources within their writing to establish the authority they are drawing from.

PATHOS

Pathos is the appeal to passion, the use of emotion to persuade readers' or listeners' opinions in a rhetorical argument. Pathetic appeals (the use of pathos) are characterized by evocative imagery, description, visuals, and the like to create within the reader or listener a sense of emotion: outrage, sorrow, excitement, etc. Pathos is often easily recognizable because audiences tend to know when what they hear or read swells emotion within their hearts and minds. Be careful to distinguish between pathos as a rhetorical vehicle to persuade using emotion and the logical fallacy "appeal to pity" (discussed more in depth further down the page). Both use emotion to make their point, but the fallacy diverts the audience from the issue to the self while the appeal emphasizes the impact of the issue.

Although argument emphasizes reason, there is usually a place for emotion as well. Emotional appeals can use sources such as interviews and individual stories to paint a moving picture of reality, or to illuminate the truth. For example, telling the story of a specific child who has been abused may make for a more persuasive argument than simply stating the number of children abused each year. The story provides the numbers with a human face. However, a writer must be careful not to employ emotional appeals which distract from the crux of the debate, argument, or point trying to be made.

Example of Pathos: A good example of pathos is in public services announcements. Some of the most popular include drug warnings: A woman is at the stove in the kitchen with a skillet. She holds up an egg and says, “This is your brain.” She cracks the egg into the skillet where it immediately begins to cook. “This is your brain on drugs.” Or the more recent billboards cautioning against (meth)amphetamines which show an attractive young person juxtaposed against a mug-shot of the same person at a later date but with pustules, open sores, missing teeth, unkempt hair, acne, running makeup, and any other assortment of detrimental and hideous signs of the drug’s ruinous capabilities. Audiences are not meant to pity these individuals; rather, the audience is meant to reel in horror at the destruction meth can cause to a person in a short amount of time. In this case, horror or shock is the emotional tool rhetoric wields to persuade. It should be noted that people with acne, unkempt hair, or other traits listed are not necessarily uncommon—in fact, these traits can be found in vast numbers of high school students; the traits are merely shown in conjunction with the normative “before” picture to elicit the desired emotion. Either of the pictures alone would not be rhetorically effective, it is only by placing them together that the audience is passionately moved.

Argumentation

DEDUCTIVE LOGICAL ARGUMENT

A deductive logical argument 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 names something about a large group, a minor premise takes a single member, and the conclusion attempts to prove that because this single member is a part of the larger group, they must also have the trait named in the original statement. For example:

MEN ARE TALL - a major premise as it works with a large group of people

BOB IS A MAN - a minor premise as we hear about only one individual of that group

BOB IS TALL - we attempt to make a conclusion based upon what we have already been told

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. Furthermore, we might ask what our definition of "tall" is. Tall is different if we are talking about the average population, or basketball players. Also, what is a man? Do transgendered individuals count? We see that the problem becomes far more complex the more we look into it.

INDUCTIVE LOGICAL ARGUMENT

As some would argue that a deductive argument works from the top down, toward a conclusion, some comment 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).

A sample inductive argument by Ben Doberstein

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 it is not until 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 ruined. 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 bounds 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, another form of birth, a 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 if 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.

Do not worry, it must be that you were meant to read this.

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 will be a logical fallacy present.

Logical Fallacies

Logical fallacies, often referred to by their Latin name "non sequitur" (which translates to "it does not follow"), are powerful tools in logic and rhetoric. When an arguer is able to identify her opponent's fallacious positions, she can point them out and expose a weakness. She undermines her opponent's position. Arguers comfortable with fallacies have an easier time avoiding them, thus making their positions more tenable. Missteps in logic can be confusing for students: sometimes a fallacy will be called by its Latin name, other times they will be referred to by a synonym; some are clumped together, and others are overly specific. For example: "Argument against the person" is often called an "Ad hominem" argument; a "Complex question" can be referred to as a "Loaded question"; "Appeal to the people" occasionally loses its distinction between direct and indirect (referred to only as "Bandwagon fallacy"); and "Begging the question" many times implies only its aspect of circular reasoning and not the other aspects. However, more important than agreeing on a name is the recognition of these non sequiturs. While a logician might dedicate her life to this topic, as a student you are expected only to avoid fallacies in your own writing and identify them in others'.

The following is a fairly comprehensive table of fallacies, and its purpose if for you to use a reference to ensure that you do not create a logical fallacy as your are writing about your discoveries throughout your rhetorical analysis. Having said that, this table can be used for more than just the completion of a rhetorical analysis; rather this table could be used as a reference for any argument or persuasion you are attempting to effectively communicate to an intended audience.

FALLACY	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
APPEAL TO FORCE	Arguer threatens reader/listener	If you don't agree with me, I will beat you up.
APPEAL TO PITY	Arguer elicits pity from reader/listener	If you don't pass me in this course, I will get kicked out of school and have to flip burgers the rest of my life.
DIRECT APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE	Arguer arouses mob mentality	The terrorists came from the middle east. Our only course of action is to turn it into a parking lot.
INDIRECT APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE	Arguer appeals to the reader/listener's desire for security, love, respect, etc.	Of course you want to read my book, it's what all the intellectuals read.

FALLACY	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
ABUSIVE ARGUMENT AGAINST THE PERSON (AD HOMINEM)	Arguer verbally abuses the other arguer	You're a moron; therefore your point is invalid.
CIRCUMSTANTIAL ARGUMENT AGAINST THE PERSON (AD HOMINEM)	Arguer presents the other arguer as predisposed to argue in this way	Of course you'd say I need braces; you're a dentist. (Anyone may be able to note I need braces.)
CONSISTENCY ARGUMENT AGAINST THE PERSON (TU QUOQUE)	Arguer presents other arguer as a hypocrite	How can you tell me not to drink and drive when you did it last weekend? (Note: don't drink and drive.)
ACCIDENT	General rule is applied to a specific case it was not intended to cover	Americans are entitled to freedom of speech, so you cannot arrest him for yelling "fire" in the theater. (Note: don't yell "fire" in the theater.)
STRAW MAN	Arguer distorts opponent's argument and then attacks the distorted argument	Our campus is "dry" and doesn't allow alcohol. Obviously the administration is composed of a bunch of puritans who don't speak for the majority and can be ignored.
MISSING THE POINT	Arguer draws conclusion different from that supported by the premises	College education costs are rising exponentially; therefore we should reduce the number of years needed to obtain a degree.
RED HERRING	Arguer leads reader/listener off track	People continually talk about the negative effects of tobacco, but did you know that the Native Americans used to smoke tobacco? Many Native American folk remedies are still used today in holistic medicine.
APPEAL TO UNQUALIFIED AUTHORITY	Arguer cites untrustworthy authority	My sixteen year old cousin Billy said that there was no moon landing, and he wants to be an astronaut, so it must be true.
APPEAL TO IGNORANCE	Premises report that nothing is known or proved, and then a conclusion is drawn	There is no way of disproving the existence of God, therefore he exists. Or, conversely: There is no way of proving the existence of God, therefore he doesn't exist.
HASTY GENERALIZATION	Conclusion is drawn from atypical sample	Mrs. Dobson's Rottweiler bit a neighbor boy; therefore all Rottweilers are violent dogs.
FALSE CAUSE	Conclusion depends on nonexistent or minor causal connection	Every time I change the channel, my sports team scores. Therefore, any time I want my team to score, I need only change the channel
SLIPPERY SLOPE	Conclusion depends on unlikely chain reaction	If Americans' rights to bear arms is taken away, foreigners will view the country as weak and disarmed and attack, easily crushing our crippled defenses and enslaving our nation to submit to their will and whim.

FALLACY	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
WEAK ANALOGY	Conclusion depends on defective analogy	My cousin Billy is just like Yao Ming, he is tall and loves basketball; therefore he will be a pro ball player just like Yao Ming.
BEGGING THE QUESTION	Arguer creates the illusion that inadequate premises are adequate by leaving out key premises, by restating the conclusion as a premise, or by reasoning in a circle	Of course animals have rights, just look at how they're being treated.
COMPLEX QUESTION	Multiple questions are concealed in a single question	Have you stopped sleeping with your secretary?
FALSE DICHOTOMY	"Either/or" statement that hides additional alternatives	Either you buy Axe body spray or you risk not attracting the ladies. Obviously you want to attract the ladies, so you will buy Axe body spray.
SUPPRESSED EVIDENCE	Arguer ignores important evidence that requires a different conclusion	Of course that child can't practice medicine, he is only a boy. (If said child is Doogie Howser.)
EQUIVOCATION	Conclusion depends on a shift in meaning of a word of phrase	A squirrel is a mammal; therefore a large squirrel is a large mammal.
AMPHIBOLY	Conclusion depends on the wrong interpretation of a syntactically ambiguous statement	John rode his bike past the tree with a helmet. (The tree has a helmet?)
COMPOSITION	Attribute is wrongly transferred from parts to whole	Bleach and ammonia individually are strong chemical cleaners; therefore if I mix them I will have a stronger chemical cleaner. (This produces various lethal gases, which would be foolish to do)
DIVISION	Attribute is wrongly transferred from whole to parts	Our campus is over one hundred years old; therefore every building on campus is over one hundred years old.

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5.7: What are the Basic Elements of Rhetorical Analysis?

The Appeal to Ethos

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

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

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

Does the writer come across as reliable?

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

Does the writer come across as authoritative and knowledgeable?

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

What kind of credentials or experience does the writer have?

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

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal to Ethos:

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



Figure 5.7.1 Brian Williams at the 2011 Time 100 Gala

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

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

Exercise 5.7.1: Analyzing Ethos

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

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

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

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

The Appeal to Pathos

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

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

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

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

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

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal to Pathos:

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

An appropriate appeal to **pathos** is different from trying to unfairly play upon the audience's feelings and emotions through fallacious, misleading, or excessively emotional appeals. Such a **manipulative** use of pathos may alienate the audience or cause

them to “tune out.” An example would be the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) **commercials** (transcript **here**) featuring the song “In the Arms of an Angel” and footage of abused animals. Even Sarah McLachlan, the singer and spokesperson featured in the commercials, admits that she changes the channel because they are too depressing (Brekke).

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

Exercise 5.7.2:Analyzing Pathos

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

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

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

Step 2: Consider these questions:

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

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

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

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

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

The Appeal to Logos

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

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

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

Does the writer organize his information clearly?

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

Does the writer provide evidence to back his claims?

- Specific examples
- Relevant source material

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

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

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal to Logos:

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

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

Exercise 5.7.3: Analyzing Logos

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

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

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

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

- Does the information progress logically throughout the article?
  - Does the writer use transitions to link ideas?
  - Do ideas in the article have a clear sense of order, or do they appear scattered and unfocused?
- Was the amount of evidence in the article proportionate to the size of the article?
  - Was there too little of it, was there just enough, or was there an overload of evidence?
- Were the examples of evidence relevant to the writer's argument?
- Were the examples clearly explained?
- Were sources cited or clearly referenced?
- Were the sources credible? How could you tell?

The Appeal to Kairos

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exercise 5.7.4: Analyzing Kairos

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

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

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

- Once the photo of the dress went viral, approximately how long after did the Salvation Army's ad appear?
- How does the ad take advantage of the publicity surrounding the dress?
- Would the ad's overall effectiveness change if it had come out later than it did?
- How late would have been too late to make an impact? Why?

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5.8: Visual Analysis in Composition and Rhetoric and Literature

In this section, we'll focus on how visual analysis functions within the composition classroom and life outside of that space. To simplify our discussion, we will consider a visual text as one that tells a story or makes a persuasive argument through its form and content without a leading or major focus on the written word. Three questions will guide this unit to help provide a better understanding of visual analysis toward its effective use in writing:

1. What is a visual analysis?
2. Why is visual analysis important?
3. How can we use visual analysis in the composition & rhetoric and literature classrooms?

What is Visual Analysis?

In the simplest understanding, visual analysis is the action of analyzing visuals to comprehend the messages they communicate to various audiences. However, a more complex investigation of the process involves a breakdown into visual rhetoric and visual literacy – the act of communicating through visuals and the ability to "read" them, respectively. In other words, *visuals are composed of elements like color, shape, space, texture, shading, and positioning that convey specific messages and meaning based on the arrangement of the elements working together and their individual impact.* How we "read" (interpret) them depends on subjective perspectives that we back up by using the text itself to support our analysis. Let's take a look at an example in Figure 3.13.1.[1]



Figure 3.13.1: Bangladeshi Spectrum workers protest deaths.

By reading the elements of this photograph in Figure 3.13.1 – without any other context provided – we might come to the following conclusions:

- The photograph represents a protest.
- The people pictured are angry/upset about an issue.
- The people are united in their objective.
- This is a public demonstration.
- The situation is immediate.

How can we make these interpretations?

- The image depicts a gathering of people with fists raised high in a symbolic protest gesture.
- Their mouths are open, indicating voices yelling for recognition.
- The flags carried by the people are all the same color.
- There is a police presence in the background, typically to provide public oversight.
- The photo is framed in closeup which provides an urgent mood/tone.

This type of reading is something we do every day as we interpret traffic lights while driving, say hello to a stranger on the sidewalk based on their facial expression, and binge-watch a favorite TV series into the wee hours of the morning, following visual cues provided in each episode.

Exercise

Activity: Discuss the following image (Figure 3.13.2[2]) with your peers to compare similar and different ways in which you interpret its visual elements:



Figure 3.13.2: Traffic lights.

But if you read visuals all the time, you might not immediately consider their importance as writing tools in composition & rhetoric and literature.

Why is Visual Analysis Important?

Because we read visuals all the time is the exact reason why visual analysis is important. We need to know how to understand visuals because they represent such large components of life: human communication, learning how-to do something, and entertainment; and within the classroom, they function as aids to help us develop critical reading, writing, and comprehension skills that can be applied to various modes of writing.

How Can We Use Visual Analysis in the Composition & Rhetoric and Literature Classrooms?

First, we must remember that literature is written and visual. We encounter stories in the form of poems, short fiction, novellas/novels, screenplays, and stage plays. But stories are also told on the small screen (television) and big screen (cinematic shorts and feature-length movies). In both composition & rhetoric and literature courses, we are sometimes provided a visual text to examine. When prompted to engage in the writing process, your instructor might ask you to write a:

- **Review/Evaluation**
  - A movie review is comparable to a book review. Your argument centers on the personal evaluation of the film (what you like, dislike, or other and why) and takes into account literary/film elements that support your claim. What separates the book and movie review is simply the medium, the format of film as a visual narrative instead of a written narrative. As a movie, elements that relate to the visuals – cinematography, camera shots, framing, montage, set and costume design – are often given priority to discuss how they contribute to the favorable and/or negative review. For a more detailed list of written and visual literature terminology, see the Visual Terminology chart later in this section.

Sample Thesis

The Blair Witch Project[3] uses shaky camera angles and dark settings to successfully convey a sense of dread as a classic modern horror film.

- **Reflection**
  - Watching a TV series or film allows you, the viewer, to compare your own lives with characters and situations represented in the narrative. An introspective discussion forms to demonstrate your personal relatability to, or disconnection from, the story. The reflection also offers the writer a chance to discuss how the narrative content of the series/film offers relevant social commentary. For example, Spike Jonze's *Her*[4] makes real-world associations regarding our use or misuse of technology to communicate with each other.

- **Rhetorical Analysis**
  - The writing could involve examining an advertisement, commercial, or marketing campaign to demonstrate how design principles (the CRAP test – contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity), use of color, and font choice indicate uses of ethos, pathos, and/or logos to effectively communicate a message and persuade the viewer. Figure 3.13.3[5] is an example.

Example of Rhetorical Analysis

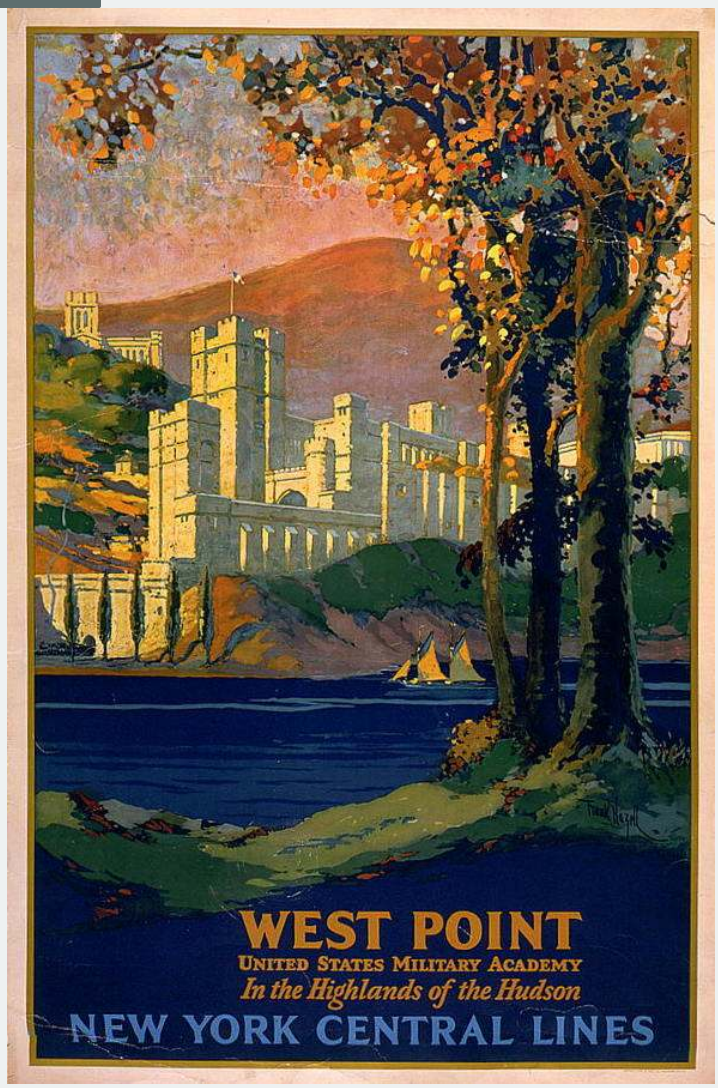


Figure 3.13.3: West Point, United States Military Academy, in the highlands of the Hudson.

The soft and warm autumn colors of the natural environment (trees, land, and water) in Figure 3.13.3 **contrast** the hard and cold building material of West Point to create a welcoming atmosphere. We see the poster like an advertisement for a vacation spot more than a military academy: **repetition** bonds the environment to the academy, as the blue and orange (primary and secondary) color scheme of the setting also appears in the text; center-**alignment** pulls focus directly to West Point; and the academy exists in close **proximity** to the natural elements to persuade the viewer to consider it in a similar perspective – natural.

The poster creates an emotional connection with its audience, particularly people who may be on the fence regarding military service and/or individuals who never considered it as a possibility. It is cohesive in its message and persuasive as it appeals to the viewer's desire to connect with nature in a picturesque location. The sailboats convey a sense of tranquility, and the academy resembles a regal castle nestled in a fairy tale landscape. We are convinced that even if we never thought about joining the military, doesn't West Point seem like a great place to start if we make that life decision?

- **Analysis/Critique**

- Literary analysis and film criticism function in the same manner – unlike the review – to examine the text (story) in order to argue what the narrative form and/or content communicate to its audience. This is typically accomplished by examining story structure, use of literary & film devices; critical theory can also be applied to "read" the text through various lenses of criticism (feminist, critical race theory, Marxist, disability studies, cultural/new historicist, queer theory, gender studies, structuralist). Visual story elements are analyzed and criticism is applied to the text to unpack various arguments presented in the narrative.
- Art criticism represents another extension of visual analysis in which you might study a painting, photograph, sculpture, installation, drawing, or other medium to interpret what the artist's work represents – what they are communicating to their audience through the art text.

- **Research**
  - The previous section on analysis/critique involves conducting research; however, research writing might also focus on a visual text in an informative manner: providing historical and cultural context, investigating development, offering description and/or definition, reporting findings, and more. In this respect, the visual text is the site of investigation and sometimes a prompt for the writing exercise. You might research the production history of *Inception*[6] or use the film to research a topic presented within it, such as lucid dreaming.

What unifies these various types of writing is that you offer persuasive arguments for your audience to consider, and supporting evidence (most often secondary source material) is used to develop the conversation and validate your claims. Visuals are used as primary sources for evaluation and/or prompts to help illustrate or provide a rhetorical situation to investigate. Although visual analysis has been covered in a few different ways in this section, always consult your instructor and/or your assignment sheet guidelines if you are unsure how visuals are being used in your course and what the expectations are for how you engage with them.

**** The elements/terms mentioned in the various types of visual texts identified above are not exhaustive. For a more comprehensive listing, try performing "soft" research in which you utilize services such as Google or Wikipedia to obtain more information regarding the specific medium.*

Visual Terminology

Written and visual texts share a lot in common regarding the elements that comprise their narratives and how we interpret them, but there are terms that distinguish the two from each other. The following "Written Literature Terminology" list (Table 3.13.1) identifies select terminology for written literature that also apply to visual narratives, but not vice versa. The subsequent "Visual Literature Terminology" list (Table 3.13.2) identifies select terminology that is applicable to visual narratives only.

[table id=1 /]

[table id=2 /]

Francis Jr., James. "Visual Analysis in Composition & Rhetoric and Literature." In *Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research*. 3rd ed. Edited by Terri Pantuso, Sarah LeMire, and Kathy Anders. College Station: Texas A&M University, 2022. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

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1. Derek Blackadder, *Bangladeshi Spectrum Workers Protest Deaths*, May 29, 2005, photograph, Flickr, accessed January 6, 2021, https://www.flickr.com/photos/39749009@N00/16231675. This image is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic License. ↵
2. Jorge González, *Traffic Lights*, April 22, 2006, photograph, Flickr, accessed January 6, 2021, https://www.flickr.com/photos/35873968@N00/134769430. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic License. ↵
3. *The Blair Witch Project*, directed by Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez (Santa Monica, CA: Artisan Entertainment, 1999). ↵
4. Her, directed by Spike Jones (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 2013.) ↵
5. Frank Hazell, *West Point, United States Military Academy, in the Highlands of the Hudson. New York Central Lines - Frank Hazell*. LCCN94504463 (Cropped).jpg. circa 1920s, Wikimedia Commons, accessed January 6, 2021, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:West_Point,_United_States_Military_Academy,_in_the_highlands_of_the_Hudson._New_York_Central_Lines_-_Frank_Hazell._LCCN94504463_(cropped).jpg. ↵
6. Inception, directed by Christopher Nolan (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 2010). ↵

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5.9: Writing a Visual Analysis

While visuals such as graphs and charts can enhance an argument when used to present evidence, visuals themselves can also present an argument. Every time you encounter an ad for a certain product, stop and consider what exactly the creators of that visual want you to believe. Who is the target audience? Does the message resonate more with one group of people than another? While most advertisements or political cartoons seem to be nebulous conveyors of commerce, if you look closely you will uncover an argument presented to you, the audience.

So how do you write a visual rhetorical analysis essay? First, you'll want to begin by examining the rhetorical strengths and weaknesses of your chosen visual. If your purpose is to write an argument *about* the visual, such as what artworks are considered "fine art," then your focus will be on demonstrating how the visual meets the criteria you establish in your thesis. To do this, try a method adapted from one on working with primary sources where you Observe, Reflect and Question.[1]

Arguments *About* a Visual

Take for example Vincent Van Gogh's "The Starry Night" (Figure 3.14.1).[2] If you want to argue that the painting is a classic example of fine art, you'll first have to define the criteria for your terms "classic" and "fine art." Next, you'll want to look for elements within the painting to support your claim. As you study the painting, try the following strategy for analysis: **Describe/Observe**; **Respond/Reflect**; **Analyze/Question**.



Figure 3.14.1: The Starry Night by Vincent Van Gogh

Describe/Observe

First, describe what you see in the visual quite literally. Begin by focusing on colors, shading, shapes, and font if you're analyzing an advertisement. In the case of "The Starry Night," you might begin by describing the various shades of blue, the black figures that resemble buildings, or shades of yellow that cast light. As you describe them, observe the texture, shape, contour, etc. about each element. For this initial stage, you are simply describing what you observe. Do not look deeper at this point.

Respond/Reflect

Next, respond to the ways in which the things you described have impacted you as a viewer. What emotions are evoked from the various shadings and colors used in the ad or painting? If there are words present, what does the artist's font selection do for the image? This is where you'll want to look for appeals to ethos and pathos. In the case of "The Starry Night," how does the use of black create depth and for what reason? Reflect on how the intermittent use of shades of blue impacts the overall impression of the painting. At this stage, you are questioning the elements used so that you may move to the final stage of analysis.

Analyze/Question

After you've described and reflected upon the various elements of the visual, question what you have noted and decide if there is an argument presented by the visual. This assessment should be made based upon what you've observed and reflected upon in terms of the content of the image alone. Ask yourself if the arrangement of each item in the visual impacts the message? Could there be something more the artist wants you to gather from this visual besides the obvious? Question the criteria you established in your thesis and introduction to see if it holds up throughout your analysis. Now you are ready to begin writing a visual rhetorical analysis of your selected image.

Arguments *Presented By/Within* a Visual

In the summer of 2015, the Bureau of Land Management ran an ad campaign with the #mypubliclandsroadtrip tag. The goal of this campaign was to "explore the diverse landscapes and resources on [our] public lands, from the best camping sites to cool rock formations to ghost towns."[3] The photo below (Figure 3.14.2)[4] is of the King Range National Conservation Area (NCA) in California which was the first NCA designated by Congress in 1970.[5] Returning to the Observe, Reflect and Question method, analysis of this photo might focus on what the image presents overall *as well as* arguments embedded within the image.



Figure 3.14.2: King Ranch National Conservation Area in California.

Describe/Observe

As with "The Starry Night", you might start by describing what you see in the visual quite literally. Begin by focusing on colors, shading, shapes, and font. With the Bureau of Land Management ad, you could begin by describing the multiple shades of blues and browns in the landscape. Next, you might focus on the contrasts between the sea and land, and the sea and sky. Making note of textures presented by various rock formations and the sand would add depth to your analysis. You might also note the solitary person walking along the shoreline. Finally, you would want to observe the placement of the sun in the sky at the horizon.

Respond/Reflect

Next, respond to the ways in which the things you described have impacted you as a viewer. What emotions are evoked from the various shadings and colors used in the photo? How does the artist's font selection impact the image? Through these observations, you will be able to identify appeals to ethos and pathos. In the Bureau of Land Management ad, you might respond to the various shades of blue as seemingly unreal yet reflect on their natural beauty as a way of creating an inviting tone. Next, reflect on the textures presented by the rocks and sand as a way of adding texture to the image. This texture further contributes to the welcoming mood of the image. By focusing on the solitary person in the image, you might respond that this landscape offers a welcoming place to reflect on life decisions or to simply enjoy the surroundings. Finally, you might respond to the placement of the sun as being either sunrise or sunset.

Analyze/Question

After describing and reflecting on the various elements of the visual, question what you have noted and decide if there is an argument presented by the image. Again, this assessment should be made based upon what you've observed and reflected upon in terms of the content of the image alone. Using the Bureau of Land Management ad, you might ask if the font choice was intentional to replicate the rolling waves, or if the framing around the edges of the image is done intentionally to tie back into the Bureau logo in the upper right-hand corner. Once you've moved beyond the surface image, question the criteria you established in your thesis and introduction to see if it holds up throughout your analysis. Now you are ready to begin writing a visual rhetorical analysis of an argument *presented by/within* your selected image.

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1. This exercise was inspired by a workshop titled "Working with Primary Sources," hosted by Meg Steele, given at the Library of Congress alongside the National Council of Teachers of English Convention in Washington, D.C. in November 2014. ↵
2. Vincent Van Gogh, The Starry Night, 1889, oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York City, Wikimedia Commons, accessed November 15, 2021, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Van_Gogh_-_Starry_Night_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. ↵
3. "Drop A Line: Explore Your Lands! My Public Lands Summer Roadtrip 2016," Bureau of Land Management, accessed November 14, 2021, https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=0d3fdf6ca0e44d258adde314479b3bdb. ↵
4. Bureau of Land Management, *My Public Lands Roadtrip*,June 3, 2015, digital photograph, Flickr, accessed January 6, 2021, https://www.flickr.com/photos/91981596@N06/18607529954. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic License. ↵
5. "King Range National Conservation Area," U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management, accessed January 14, 2021, https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/california/king-range-national-conservation-area. ↵

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5.10: Striking a Balance

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



Figure 5.10.1 An Unbalanced Argument

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

Key Takeaways

Understanding the Rhetorical Situation:

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

Identifying the Rhetorical Appeals:

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

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

Exercise 5.10.1: Rhetorical Analysis Practice

Step 1: Choose one of the articles linked below.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contributors and Attributions

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5.11: Rhetorical Fallacies

What Are Fallacies, and Why Should You Avoid Them?

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

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

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

What Are Formal Fallacies?

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

Premise: All black bears are omnivores.

Premise: All raccoons are omnivores.

Conclusion: All raccoons are black bears.

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

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

Premise: All Arabs are Muslims.

Premise: All Iranians are Muslims.

Conclusion: All Iranians are Arabs.

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

What Are Informal Fallacies?

Informal fallacies take many forms and are widespread in everyday discourse. Very often they involve bringing irrelevant information into an argument, or they are based on assumptions that, when examined, prove to be incorrect. Formal fallacies are created when the relationship between premises and conclusion does not hold up or when premises are unsound; informal fallacies are more dependent on misuse of language and of evidence.

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

How Can You Check for Fallacies?

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

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

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

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

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

Fallacies of Irrelevance

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

Red Herring Fallacies

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

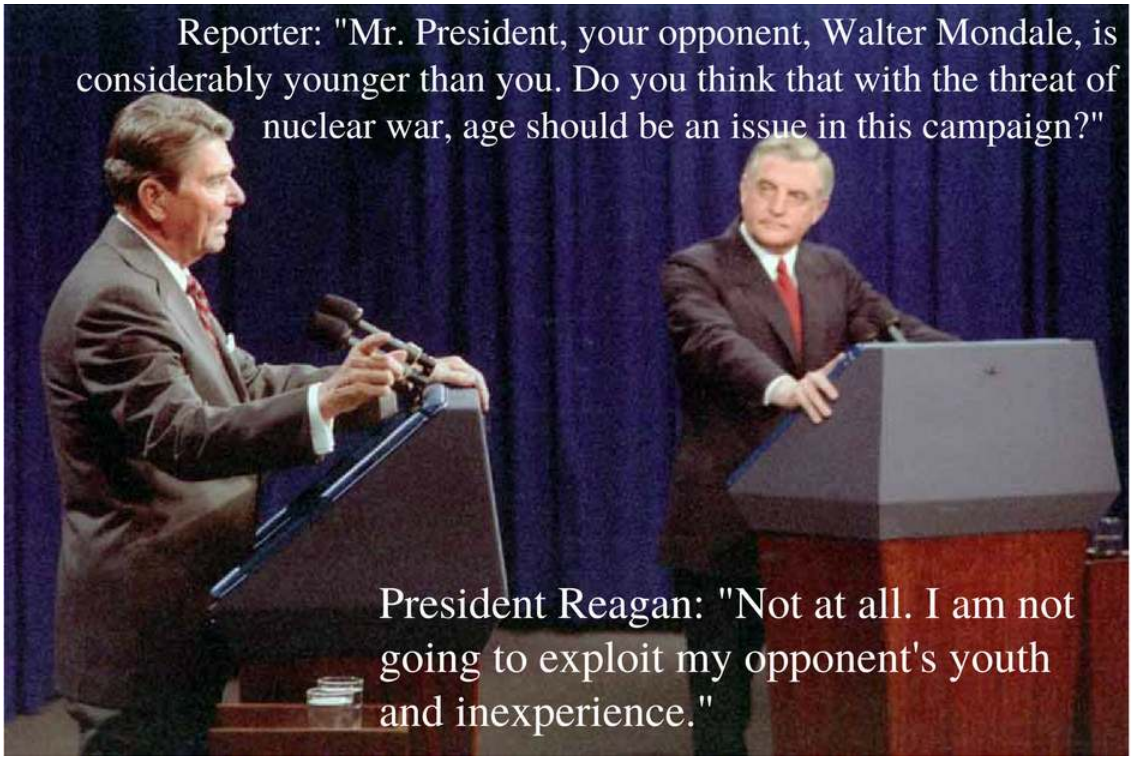


Figure 5.11.1Reagan's Red Herring

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

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

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



Figure 5.11.2Student vs Freud Ad Hominem

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

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

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

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

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



Figure 5.11.3Poisoning the well

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

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



Figure 5.11.4Guilt by Association

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

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

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

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

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

Irrelevant Appeals

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

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

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

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

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



Figure 5.11.5Appeal to popularity

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

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

- **Appeal to Incredulity** —suggests that a lack of understanding is a valid excuse for rejecting an idea. Just because someone does not personally understand how something works does not mean that thing is false. A person does not need to understand

how a car's engine works to know that it *does* work, for instance. Often, in addition to rejecting the difficult idea, the arguer goes on to suggest that anyone who believes in the idea is foolish to do so.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Example: "Hi, I'm a famous actress, and while I'm not a qualified psychologist, read my new self-help book for how you, too, can avoid depression!" Fame and fortune alone do not turn someone into a qualified expert. Appealing to a person's expertise solely based on wealth and position is thus logically flawed.

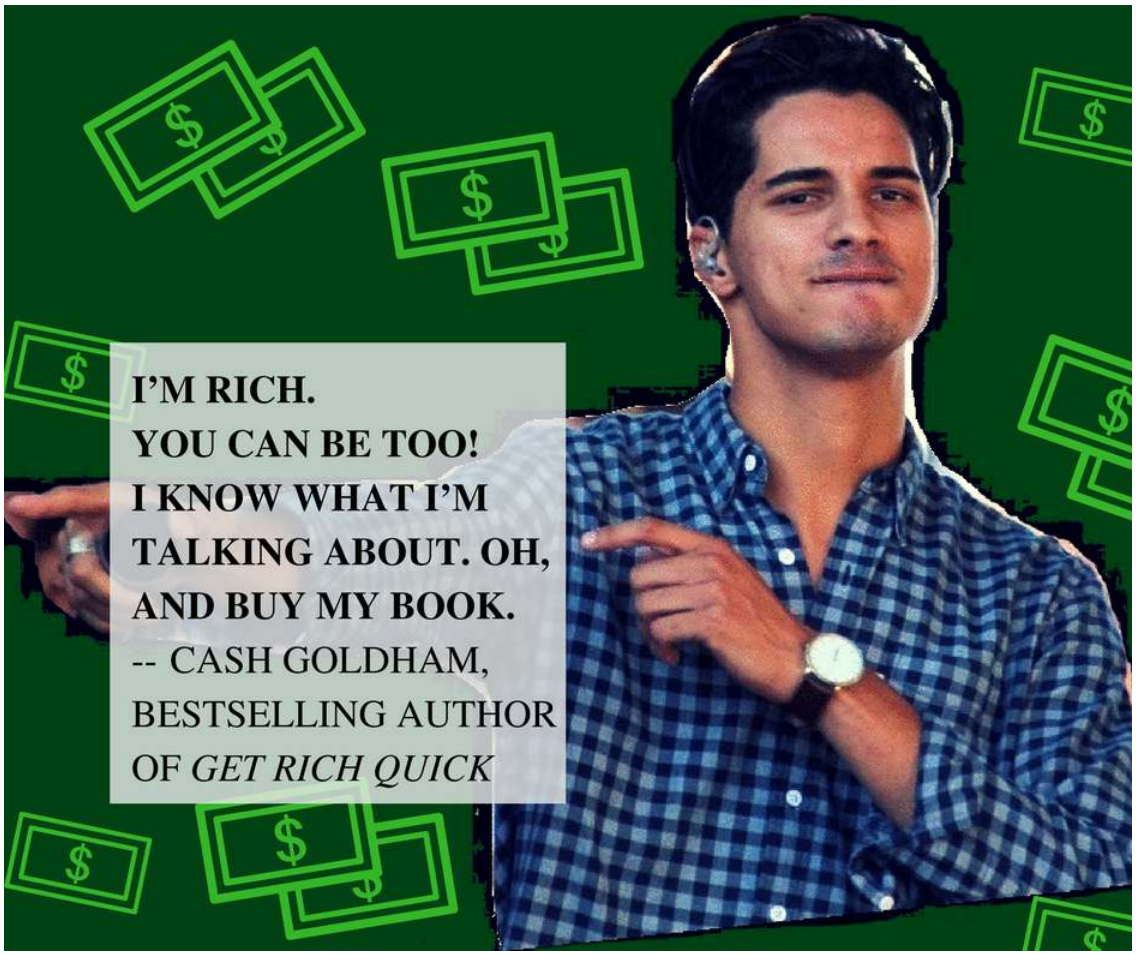


Figure 5.11.6 Appeal to Wealth

- **Appeal to Poverty** —the mirror of the above irrelevant appeal, that poor people have special knowledge or wisdom because of their adverse economic circumstances. This can work in another way: that poor people are particularly deficient in knowledge or wisdom because they are poor. However, neither assumption constitutes sound reasoning. The conditions of poverty are far too complex.

Example: "That man lives on unemployment benefits, so why would I care about his opinion on anything?" The arguer in this scenario unreasonably uses another's poverty against him, by implying that a poor person would have worthless ideas. This implication has embedded within it the idea that someone is only poor because of some sort of personal lack–intelligence, morality, good sense, and so on. However, it is quite reasonable for a poor person to be intelligent, ethical, and wise. To assume otherwise is to risk making logical mistakes.

Fallacies of Presumption

To call someone presumptuous is to accuse that person of overreaching—making bold assertions without adequate reason or failing to follow the rules of behavior (but presuming it is okay to do so). The logical fallacy version of this involves making a case with inadequate or tainted evidence, or even no evidence whatsoever, or by having unjustified reasons for making the case in the first place.

Working with Flawed Evidence

These fallacies occur when an author uses evidence that has been compromised.

- **Hasty Generalization** —A hasty generalization derives its conclusion from too little information, evidence, or reason.

One type of hasty generalization is jumping to a conclusion from a small amount of evidence.

Example: Having one bad meal at a restaurant and then immediately concluding that all meals from that restaurant will be just as bad.



Figure 5.11.7Hasty Generalization

Another type of hasty generalization involves relying on **anecdotal evidence** for support. As human beings, we overestimate the power of personal experience and connections, so they can drown out scientific data that contradict an individual—or anecdotal—experience. Additionally, anecdotal evidence is persuasive because of the human desire for perfection. Perfection is a lofty—and mostly unreachable—goal, and when a product or a person or a program fails to live up to perfection, it becomes easier to dismiss—particularly when a personal story or two of imperfection is involved. Accurate information, however, comes from a much larger amount of data—analysis of hundreds or thousands or even millions of examples. Unfortunately, data can feel impersonal and, therefore, less convincing.

Example: "I love my new Banana[tm]laptop. The product ratings for it are very high." "Oh, no one should ever buy one of their computers! My brother had one, and it was full of glitches." Basing a judgement or an argument on a personal story or two, as in this case, is not logical but can be incredibly persuasive. However, if 98% of Banana[tm]computers run perfectly well, and only 2% have glitches, it is illogical to use that 2% to write this product off as universally terrible.

In scholarship, hasty generalizations can happen when conclusions derive from an **unrepresentative sample**. Data coming from a group that fail to represent the group's full complexity is unrepresentative, and any results drawn from that data will be flawed.

Example: If advances in cancer research were only, or mostly, tested on men, that would be unrepresentative of humanity because half of the human population—women—would not be represented. What if the cancer treatments affect women differently?

Another type of hasty generalization derived from poor research is the **biased sample**. This comes from a group that has a predisposed bias to the concepts being studied.

Example: If a psychologist were to study how high school students handled challenges to their religious views, it would be flawed to only study students at schools with a religious affiliation since most of those students may be predisposed toward a single type of religious view.

- **Sweeping Generalization** —the inverse of the hasty generalization. Instead of making a conclusion from little evidence, the sweeping generalization applies a general rule to a specific situation without providing proper evidence, without demonstrating that the rule even applies, or without providing for exceptions. Stereotyping is one prominent type of sweeping generalization; a

stereotype derives from general ideas about a group of people without accounting for exceptions or accuracy or that there is any sound reasoning behind the stereotype.

- **Confirmation Bias** —a pernicious fallacy that can trip even careful scholars. It occurs when the writer or researcher is so convinced by her point of view that she only seeks to confirm it and, thus, ignores any evidence that would challenge it. Choosing only data that support a preformed conclusion is called cherry picking and is a one-way ticket to skewed results. Related to this fallacy is another—disconfirmation bias—when the writer or researcher puts so much stock in her side of the argument that she does not apply equal critical evaluation to the arguments and evidence that support the other side. In other words, while too easily and uncritically accepting what supports her side, she is unreasonably critical of opposing arguments and evidence.

Example: In the later nineteenth century, when archeology was a new and thrilling field of study, Heinrich Schliemann excavated the ancient city of Troy, made famous in Homer's epic poem, *The Iliad*. In fact, Schliemann used *The Iliad* as a guide, so when he excavated, he looked to find structures (like walls) and situations (proof of battles) in the archeological remains. While Schliemann's work is still considered groundbreaking in many ways, his method was flawed. It allowed him to cherry pick his results and fit them to his expectations–i.e., that his results would fit the myth. When Schliemann sought to confirm story elements from *The Iliad* in the archeological record, he risked misinterpreting his data. What if the data was telling a different story than that in *The Iliad* ? How could he know for sure until he put the book down and analyzed the archeological evidence on its own merits? For more on Schliemann and his famous early excavations, see his Encyclopedia Britannica entry(https://tinyurl.com/y9tk4vou), or look up "Heinrich Schliemann" in the *Gale Virtual Reference Library* database.

- **No True Scotsman** —a false claim to purity for something that is too complex for purity, like a group, an identity, or an organization. Those making claims to purity usually attempt to declare that anyone who does not fit their "pure" definition does not belong. For example, national identity is complicated and can mean something different to each person who claims that identity; therefore, it is too complex for a one-size-fits-all definition and for any one litmus test to prove that identity.

Examples: "No real Scot would put ice in his scotch!" "No real man would drink lite beer!" "No real feminist would vote Republican!" Each of these statements assumes that everyone has the same definition for the identities or groups discussed: Scots, men, and feminists. However, the members of each group are themselves diverse, so it is illogical to make such blanket declarations about them. It is actually quite reasonable for a Scottish person to like ice in her scotch and still claim a Scottish identity or for a man to drink lite beer without relinquishing his manhood or for a feminist to vote Republican while still working toward women's rights.



Figure 5.11.8"No true Scotsman, No true Southerner"

Working with No Evidence

These fallacies occur when the evidence asserted turns out to be no evidence whatsoever.

- **Burden of Proof** —This logical fallacy, quite similar to the appeal to ignorance, occurs when the author forgets that she is the one responsible for supporting her arguments and, instead, shifts the burden of proof to the audience.

Example: "Larry stole my painting," Edith cried. "Prove to me he didn't!" No: The one making the claim must give reasons and evidence for that claim *before* anyone else is obligated to refute it. If Edith cannot give sound proof of Larry's guilt, the argument should be rejected.

- **Arguing from Silence or Ignorance** —Like the burden of proof fallacy, this one occurs when the author, either implicitly or explicitly, uses a lack of evidence as a type of proof. This is the basis for most conspiracy theory nonsense, as if the lack of evidence is so hard to believe, the only reason to explain why it is missing is a cover up. Remember, it is the writer's job to present positive proof (evidence that actually exists and can be literally seen) to support any argument made. If a writer cannot find evidence, he must admit that he may be wrong and then, find a new argument!

Example: "There is no proof that Joe the Politician conspired with the Canadians to rig the elections." "A-ha! That there is nothing to find is proof that he did! He must have paid off everyone involved to bury the evidence." Lack of proof cannot be–in and of itself–a type of proof because it has no substance; it is a nothing. Is it possible that proof may arise in the future? Yes, but until it does, the argument that Joe and the Canadians rigged an election is illegitimate. Is it possible that Joe both rigged the election and paid people off to hide it? Again, yes, but there are two problems with this reasoning: (1) Possibility, like absence of evidence, is not in itself a type of evidence, and (2) possibility does not equal probability. Just because something is possible does not mean it is probable, let alone likely or a sure thing. Those supporting conspiracy theories try to convince others that lack of proof is a type of proof and that a remote possibility is actually a surety. Both fail the logic test.

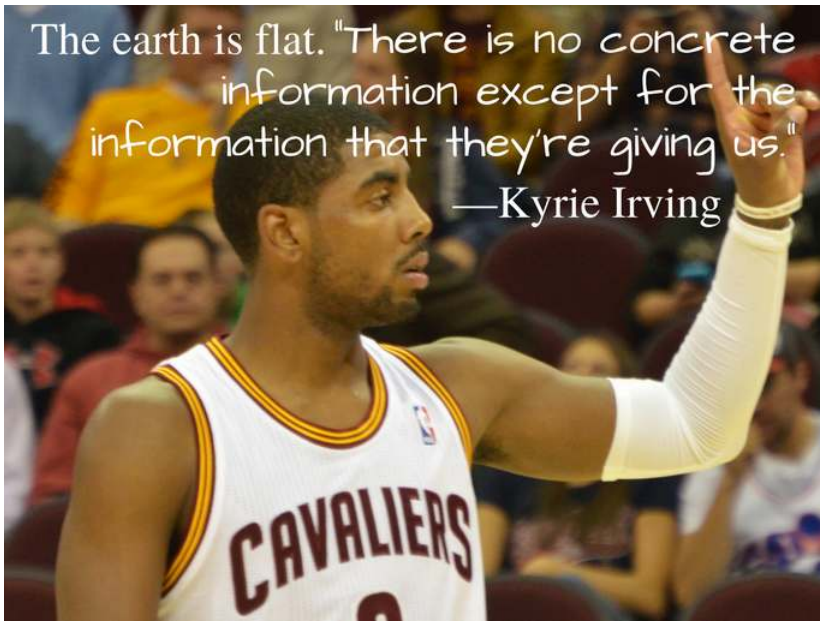


Figure 5.11.9 Arguing from Ignorance

- **Circular Reasoning** —also known as begging the question, occurs when, instead of providing reasons for a claim, the arguer just restates the claim but in a different way. An author cannot sidestep reasons and proof for an argument by just repeating the claim over and over again.

Example: "The death penalty is sinful because it is wrong and immoral." The conclusion (the death penalty is sinful) looks like it is supported by two premises (that it is wrong, that it is immoral). The problem is that the words "wrong" and "immoral" are too close in meaning to "sinful," so they are not actual reasons; rather, they are just other ways to state the claim.

- **Special Pleading** —Anyone who makes a case based on special circumstances without actually providing any reasonable evidence for those circumstances is guilty of special pleading.

Example: "Is there any extra credit I can do to make up for my missing work?" Many students have asked this of their college professors. Embedded within the question is a logical fallacy, the insistence that the student asking it should get special treatment and be rewarded with extra credit even though he missed prior assignments. If the student has logical (and preferably documented) reasons for missing course work, then the fallacy of special pleading does not apply. Those expecting to be given special treatment without reasonable justification have committed the special pleading fallacy.

- **Moving the Goalposts** —happens when one keeps changing the rules of the game in mid-play without any reasonable justification.

Example: This fallacy occurs in Congress quite a lot, where the rules for a compromise are established in good faith, but one side or the other decides to change those rules at the last minute without good reason or evidence for doing so.

- **Wishful Thinking** —involves replacing actual evidence and reason with desire, i.e., desire for something to be true. Wanting an idea to be real or true, no matter how intensely, does not constitute rational support. This fallacy often occurs when closely-held ideas and beliefs are challenged, particularly if they are connected to family and identity or if they serve self interest.

Example: People do not like to see their personal heroes tarnished in any way. If a popular sports hero, e.g., is accused of a crime, many fans will refuse to believe it because they just don't want to. This plays right into the wishful thinking fallacy.



Figure 5.11.10Wishful Thinking

Working with False Ideas about Evidence or Reasoning

These fallacies either (1) presume something is a reason for or evidence of something else when that connection has not been adequately or fairly established or (2) unfairly limit one's choices of possible reasons.

- **Either/Or Reasoning** — also known as false dilemma/dichotomy, occurs when one presents only two options in an argument when there are, in fact, many more options. Arguments have multiple sides, not just two, so when only two are presented, readers are forced to choose between them when they should be able to draw from a more complex range of options. Another way to talk about the false dichotomy is to call it reductionist because the arguer has *reduced* the options from many to only two.

Example: "So, are you a dog person or a cat person? Are you a Beatles person or a Rolling Stones person? You can be only one!" Both of these examples provide a false choice between two options when there are clearly others to choose from. One might also reasonably choose both or neither. When an arguer only provides two options, she tries to rig the response and to get the responder to only work within the severely limited framework provided. Life is more complicated than that, so it is unreasonable to limit choices to only two.



Figure 5.11.11False Dilemma

- **Loaded Question** —embeds a hidden premise in the question, so anyone who responds is forced to accept that premise. This puts the responder at an unfair disadvantage because he has to either answer the question and, by doing so, accept the premise, or challenge the question, which can look like he is ducking the issue.

Example: “So, when did you start practicing witchcraft?” The hidden premise here is that the responder is a witch, and any reply is an admittance to that as a fact. An open question, one that does not trick the responder into admitting the presumption of witchcraft, would be this: “Are you a witch?”

False Cause

These fallacies assert causes that are more assumptions than actual causes. There are three types of false cause fallacies:

- **Post hoc, ergo propter hoc** —In Latin, this phrase means “after this, therefore, because of this,” which asserts that when one thing happens before another thing, the first must have caused the second. This is a false assumption because, even if the two things are related to each other, they do not necessarily have a causal relationship.

Example: Superstitions draw power from this logical fallacy. If a black cat crosses Joe the Politician’s path, and the next day Joe loses the election, is he justified, logically, in blaming the cat? No. Just because the cat’s stroll happened before the election results does not mean the one caused the other.

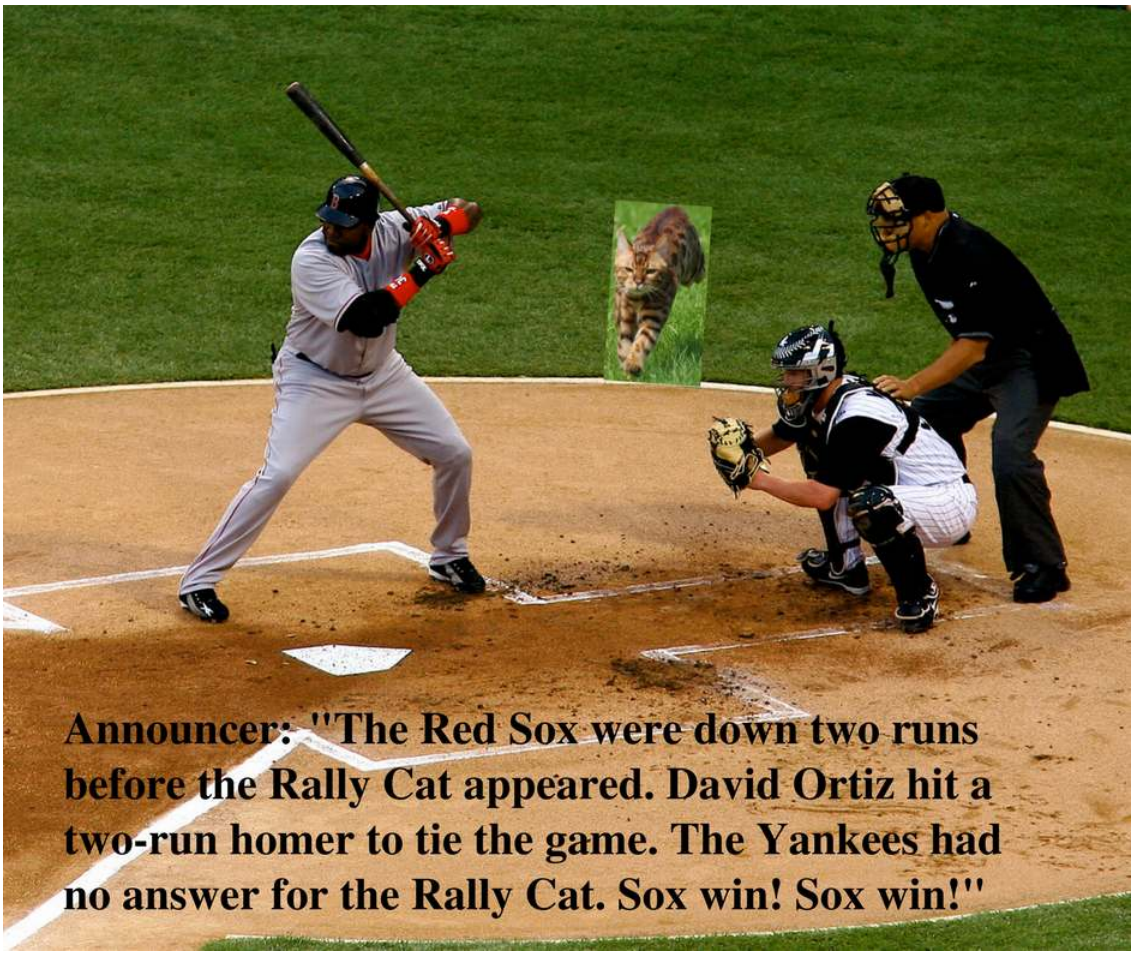


Figure 5.11.12Post Hoc ergo Propter Hoc

- **Slippery Slope** —the cause/effect version of jumping to a conclusion. A slippery slope argument claims that the first link in a causal chain will inevitably end in the most disastrous result possible, thus working to scare the audience away from the initial idea altogether. Keep in mind, legitimate and logical causal chains can be argued: where one cause leads to a logical effect, which then leads to the next logical effect, which then leads to the next logical effect, and so on. Those using the slippery slope fallacy, however, do not bother to carefully establish a logical chain but rather skip right ahead to the worst possible conclusion.

Example: “Oh no, if I fail this test, my whole life is ruined!” This is a common fear among panicked students but is a prime example of the slippery slope. The student likely imagines this sort of logical chain: a failed test → failed class → getting behind in college → flunking out of college → all future job prospects falling through → total unemployment → abject poverty → becoming a pariah to family and friends → a thoroughly ruined life. The worry is that failing a test, should it even happen at all, will automatically result in the worst possible case: a totally failed life. However, when thought through more calmly and logically, hopefully, the student will realize that many mitigating factors lie between one failed test and total ruination and that the total ruination result is actually quite unlikely.

- **Cum hoc, ergo propter hoc** —In Latin, this phrase translates to “with this, therefore, because of this,” which suggests that because two or more things happen at the same time they must be related. This, however, doesn’t account for other logical possibilities, including coincidence.

Example: “Gah! Why does the phone always ring as we sit down to dinner?” This question implies that those two events have something to do with each other when there are likely far more logical reasons that they do not.

Fallacies of Ambiguity

To be ambiguous is to be unclear; thus, fallacies of ambiguity are those that, intentionally or not, confuse the reader through lack of clarity. They create a fog that makes it difficult to see what the conclusion or the reasonable parts of an argument are, or the fog prevents a reasonable conclusion in the first place.

- **Quoting out of Context** —occurs when quoting someone without providing all the necessary information to understand the author's meaning. Lack of context means that the original quote's meaning can be obscured or manipulated to mean something the original author never intended. Usually that context comes from the original text the quote came from that the borrower has failed to include or deliberately excluded.

Example: Original statement: "You may hand write your assignments but only when instructed to in the assignment schedule."

Quote used: "You may hand write your assignments."

Clearly, the quoted part leaves out some crucial information, qualifying information that puts limits on the initial instruction. The scenario may be this: The original statement came from a professor's syllabus, and the student quoted just the first part to an advisor, for instance, while trying to register a complaint over a bad grade for an assignment he hand wrote but wasn't supposed to. When the student exclaims, "But my professor told me I could hand write my assignments!" he is guilty of muddying the truth by quoting out of context. He left out the part that told him to verify the assignment instructions to see if handwriting were allowable or not.

- **Straw Man** —Creating a straw man argument involves taking a potentially reasonable argument and misrepresenting it, usually through scare tactics or oversimplification, i.e., by creating an argument that sounds similar to the original but in reality is not. The straw man argument is designed to be outrageous and upsetting, and thus easier to defeat or get others to reject. Why try to dismantle and rebut a reasonable argument when one can just knock the head off the straw man substitute instead?

Example: "I think we need to get rid of standardized testing in junior high and high school, at least in its current form." "That's terrible! I can't believe you don't want any standards for students. You just want education to get even worse!" In this scenario, the second person has committed the straw man fallacy. She has distorted the first person's argument–that standardized *testing* in its current form should be eliminated–and replaced it with a much more objectionable one–that *all* educational standards should be eliminated. Because there are more ways than just testing to monitor educational standards, the second person's argument is a blatant misrepresentation and an over simplification.



Figure 5.11.13Straw Man

- **Equivocation** —happens when an author uses terms that are abstract or complex—and, therefore, have multiple meanings or many layers to them—in an overly simple or misleading fashion or without bothering to define the particular use of that term.

Example: “I believe in freedom.” The problem with this statement is it assumes that everyone understands just exactly what the speaker means by freedom. Freedom from what? Freedom to do what? Freedom in a legal sense? In an intellectual sense? In a spiritual sense? Using a vague sense of a complex concept like freedom leads to the equivocation fallacy.

Fallacies of Inconsistency

This category of fallacies involves a lack of logical consistency within the parts of the argument itself or on the part of the speaker.

- **Inconsistency Fallacy** —is one of the more blatant fallacies because the speaker is usually quite up-front about his inconsistency. This fallacy involves making contradictory claims but attempting to offset the contradiction by framing one part as a disclaimer and, thus, implying that the disclaimer inoculates the one making it from any challenge.

Example 1: “I’m not a racist but….” If what follows is a racist statement, the one saying this is guilty of the inconsistency fallacy and of making a racist statement. Making a bold claim against racism is not a shield.

Example 2: “I can’t be sexist because I’m a woman.” The speaker, when making this kind of statement and others like it, assumes that she cannot logically be called out for making a sexist statement because she happens to be a member of a group (women) who are frequent victims of sexism. If the statements she makes can objectively be called sexist, then she is guilty of both sexism and the inconsistency fallacy.



Figure 5.11.14Inconsistency Fallacy

- **False Equivalence** —asserts that two ideas or groups or items or experiences are of equal type, standing, and quality when they are not.

Example: The belief in intelligent design and the theory of evolution are often falsely equated. The logical problem lies not with desire to support one or the other idea but with the idea that these two concepts are the same *type* of concept. They are not. Intelligent design comes out of belief, mainly religious belief, while evolution is a scientific theory underpinned by factual data. Thus, these two concepts should not be blithely equated. Furthermore, because these two concepts are not the same type, they do not need to be in opposition. In fact, there are those who may well believe in intelligent design while also subscribing to the theory of evolution. In other words, their religious beliefs do not restrict an adherence to evolutionary theory. A religious belief is faith based and, thus, is not evaluated using the same principles as a scientific theory would be.

- **False Balance** —applies mainly to journalists who, because they wish to present an appearance of fairness, falsely claim that two opposing arguments are roughly equal to each other when one actually has much more weight to it—of both reasoning and evidence.

Example: The majority of scientists accept climate change as established by empirical evidence, while a scant few do not; putting one representative of each on a news program, however, implies that they represent an equal number of people, which is clearly false.

Key Takeaways

- Both formal and informal fallacies are errors of reasoning, and if writers rely on such fallacies, even unintentionally, they undercut their arguments, particularly their crucial appeals to *logos*. For example, if someone defines a key term in an argument in an ambiguous way or if someone fails to provide credible evidence, or if someone tries to distract with irrelevant or inflammatory ideas, her arguments will appear logically weak to a critical audience.
- More than just *logos* is at stake, however. When listeners or readers spot questionable reasoning or unfair attempts at audience manipulation, they may conclude that an author's ethics have become compromised. The credibility of the author (*ethos*) and perhaps the readers' ability to connect with that writer on the level of shared values (*pathos*) may well be damaged.

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5.12.1: Kairos and Pathos

Learning Objectives

- Recognize appeals to pathos
- Evaluate appeals to pathos

Kairos means the right moment or, more simply, timeliness. Appeals to emotion are more likely to be effective work if they are also timely. For example, people were more likely to give to charities related to 9/11 soon after the tragedy than they are now. However, donations still rise nearer the actual date of September 11 each year. This is an intersection of kairos and pathos. In other words, people's emotions are heightened because of the time. Timeliness and emotion might be tied to an annual event such as sadness or depression on the anniversary of a loved one's death or pride in America at the 4th of July. Other examples could have much larger time frames, such as suspicion and fear of one's neighbors during the Communist witch hunts of the 1940s and 50s. Or they could be on a much smaller scale, like someone being more generous and cheerful than normal on Friday evenings. When writing and considering an appeal to pathos, also consider the timeliness. If you were writing a piece on why present-day Americans should fear a widespread viral infectious disease outbreak, it might seem untimely to use the example of smallpox, which was eradicated decades ago, especially since there have been more recent diseases that present greater threats to the limits of modern medicine.

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5.12.2: Introduction to Ethos

What you'll learn to do: recognize and establish appeals to ethos

Ethos is the defining character or disposition of a person, community, or group. When we refer to ethos as a rhetorical appeal, we are referring to the ways in which credibility, or good character, is established and maintained. As a reader, viewer, or consumer, you need to be aware of the ways an individual or artifact manipulates ethos appeals to strengthen persuasiveness. As an author, you need to craft strong ethos appeals to highlight the credibility of your own work.

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5.12.3: Appeals to Ethos

Learning Objective

- Recognize appeals to ethos

Good speakers or writers lead the audience to feel comfortable with their knowledge of a topic. The audience sees them as people worth listening to—clear or insightful thinkers, or at least people who are well informed and genuinely interested in the topic.

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

Author's Background

The first and most obvious marker of ethos is the author's background. Ask yourself whether the writer's education or experience provides credibility to speak or write about this issue. Will the audience be persuaded that this individual has authority in this area? Evaluating an appeal to ethos should not stop there, however.

Evidence and Sources

You should also consider the evidence and sources used by the author. Investigate whether the writer or speaker has cited sources or provided opportunities for the audience to access further information on the issue. Does the writer provide complete and accurate information about the issue? Does the writer use the evidence fairly? Does he or she avoid selective use of evidence or other types of manipulation of data? Fair incorporation of credible evidence from authoritative, accessible sources builds ethos.

Acknowledgment of Opposition and Complexity

Finally, consider the author's willingness to examine the scope and depth of the issue, including arguments that may oppose the author's position. Does the writer demonstrate familiarity with different opinions and perspectives? Does the writer speak respectfully about people who may have different opinions and perspectives? Does the writer use unbiased language? Does the writer accurately convey the positions of people with whom he or she disagrees? Does the writer avoid oversimplification? Full, even-handed treatment of topics is a marker of ethos.

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5.12.4: Manipulative Appeals to Ethos

Learning Objective

- Recognize appeals 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; however, Janet Cooke, Stephen Glass, Jayson Blair, and Brian Williams all lost their jobs for plagiarizing or fabricating part of their news stories. Janet Cooke's Pulitzer Prize was revoked after it was discovered that she made up "Jimmy," an eight-year-old heroin addict (Prince, 2010). Brian Williams was fired as anchor of the NBC Nightly News for exaggerating his role in the Iraq War.

Others have become infamous for claiming academic degrees that they didn't earn as in the case of Marilee Jones. At the time of discovery, she was Dean of Admissions at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). After 28 years of employment, it was determined that she never graduated from college (Lewin, 2007). However, on her website (http://www.marileejones.com) she is still promoting herself as "a sought-after speaker, consultant and author" (para. 1) and "one of the nation's most experienced College Admissions Deans" (para. 2).

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 appear in the chart below. When you recognize these fallacies being committed you should question the credibility of the speaker and the legitimacy of the argument.

Fallacy	Description	Example
Ad Hominem	Attacking the person making an argument rather than the argument itself.	Of course that doctor advocates vaccination—he probably owns stock in a pharmaceutical company.
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.	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.	My opponent is a card-carrying member of the K.K.K.
Poisoning the Well	Undermining an opponent's credibility before he or she gets a chance to speak.	The prosecution is going to bring up a series of 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.	In politics, decorating a stage with red, white, and blue flags and bunting.
Name-Calling	Labeling an opponent with words that have negative connotations in an effort to undermine the opponent's credibility.	He's just a dumb jock.
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.	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	Inserting an endorsement of the argument by someone who is popular or respected but who lacks expertise or authority in the area under discussion	Eat this cereal because Beyonce eats it, too.

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5.12.5: Establishing Ethos

Learning Objective

- Recognize strategies for establishing appeals to ethos

Establishing ethos in your own writing is all about using credibility—either your own or that of your sources—in order to be persuasive. Essentially, ethos is about believability. Will your audience find you believable? What can you do to ensure that they do?

You can establish ethos—or credibility—in two basic ways: you can use or build your own credibility on a topic, or you can use credible sources, which, in turn, builds your credibility as a writer.

Credibility is extremely important in building an argument, so, even if you don't have a lot of built-in credibility or experience with a topic, it's important for you to work on your credibility by integrating the credibility of others into your argument.

Aristotle argued that ethos was the most powerful of the modes of persuasion, and while you may disagree, you can't discount its power. After all, think about the way advertisers use ethos to get us to purchase products. Taylor Swift sells us music, and LeBron James sells us basketball. Their fame, names, and expertise are selling us products.

With the power of ethos in mind, here are some strategies you can use to help build your ethos in your arguments.

strategies for building ethos

If you have specific experience or education related to your issues, mention it in some way.

If you don't have specific experience or education related to your issue, make sure you find sources from authors who do. When you integrate that source information, it's best if you can address the credibility of your sources. When you have credible sources, you want to let your audience know about them. Introduce your sources with signal phrases that highlight their authority, such as, "Harvard Distinguished Professor of Philosophy Joseph Menson notes" or "According to a study by the University of Berkeley's School of Economics." Highlight any other factors about the source that might accentuate credibility, such as the nature, length, or size of research studies.

Use a reasoned tone that is appropriate to your writing situation and will make you sound credible as a writer. Controversial issues can often bring out some extreme emotions in us when we write, but we have to avoid sounding extreme, especially in academic arguments. You may not convince everyone to agree with you, but you at least need your audience to listen to what you have to say.

Avoid logical fallacies that misuse ethos appeals, such as ad hominem, false authority, guilt by association, poisoning the well, transfer fallacy, name-calling, plain folk, and testimonial.

Kairos and Ethos

You can also use kairos as a strategy for building ethos. You'll recall that *kairos* refers to a favorable moment for action. Most issues have energy or agency within certain time frames. Think about Martin Luther King, Junior's "I Have a Dream" speech. It was the right speech for the right time. Choosing to write about an issue that has current energy and interest contributes to your ethos by presenting you as an engaged, aware writer who is willing to tackle important issues in critical times.

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5.12.6: Putting It Together- Rhetorical Appeals

Rhetorical appeals are powerful tools of persuasion for writers and speakers. Now that you have learned to recognize, evaluate, and establish those appeals, apply them to your own college work and keep these basic principles in mind:

1. Understand that appeals to logos are contextual and must be sufficient, typical, accurate, and relevant to be valid in an argument. Also, be aware that facts and data can be easily manipulated and misused.
2. Be aware of appeals to pathos as both reader and writer. As a reader, be aware of how a piece works to connect through emotions, attitudes, values, and/or beliefs rather than through logos and ethos. As a writer, be careful not to overly rely on appeals to emotion.
3. Establish ethos appeals by highlighting relevant education and experience, acknowledging opposition and complexity, and avoiding manipulative appeals.

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5.12.7: Why It Matters- Rhetorical Appeals



Rhetorical appeals are fundamental elements of the art of persuasion as defined by Aristotle. As a reader and a listener, it is vital that you are able to recognize how writers and speakers rely upon **ethos**, **logos**, and **pathos** in their efforts to communicate.

As a communicator yourself, you will benefit from being able to see how others use ethos, logos, and pathos so that you can apply what you learn to your own speaking and writing.

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5.12.8: Introduction to Logos

What you'll learn to do: recognize and evaluate appeals 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?

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5.12.9: Appeals to Logos

Learning Objectives

- Recognize appeals to logos
- Evaluate appeals to logos

Logos is about appealing to your audience's logical side. You have to think about what makes sense to your audience and use that as you build your argument. As writers, we appeal to logos by presenting a line of reasoning in our arguments that is logical and clear. We use evidence, such as statistics and factual information, when we appeal to logos.

In order to develop strong appeals to logos, we have to avoid faulty logic. Faulty logic can be anything from assuming one event caused another to making blanket statements based on little evidence.

Appeals to logos are an important part of academic writing, but you will see them in commercials, as well. Although they more commonly use pathos and ethos, advertisers will sometimes use logos to sell products. For example, commercials based on saving consumers money, such as car commercials that focus on miles per gallon, are appealing to the consumers' sense of logos.

As you work to build logos in your arguments, keep the following strategies in mind:

- **Both experience and source material can provide you with evidence to appeal to logos.** While outside sources will provide you with excellent evidence in an argumentative essay, in some situations, you can share personal experiences and observations. Just make sure they are appropriate to the situation and you present them in a clear and logical manner.
- **Remember to think about your audience as you appeal to logos**. Just because something makes sense in your mind, doesn't mean it will make the same kind of sense to your audience. You need to try to see things from your audience's perspective. Having others read your writing, especially those who might disagree with your position, is helpful.
- **Be sure to maintain clear lines of reasoning throughout your argument**. One error in logic can negatively impact your entire position. When you present faulty logic, you lose credibility.
- When presenting an argument based on logos, i**t is important to avoid emotional overtones and maintain an even tone of voice.** Remember, it's not just a matter of the type of evidence you are presenting; how you present this evidence is important as well.

practice

Watch the video below and think about how it appeals to logos.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: http://pb.libretexts.org/wsl/?p=204

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5.12.10: The STAR Criteria

Learning Objective

- Evaluate appeals to logos

Logos may seem like the most straightforward of the logical appeals, but recognizing such appeals is trickier than you might expect. Especially in the age of "alternative facts," it is important that you be able to recognize valid logical and/or factual evidence. The STAR criteria—**S**ufficiency, **T**ypicality, **A**ccuracy, and **R**elevance—are a handy means of evaluating content and deciding whether or not it is logically valid.

Measure	Question	Examples and Notes
Sufficiency	Is there *enough* cited evidence to support the conclusion?	Generally, only "strongly" and not "weakly" supported conclusions should be accepted. The more controversial a claim is, the more evidence authors should provide before expecting an audience to accept it. If the evidence is not sufficient, the author may need to modify or qualify the claim, by stating that something is true 'sometimes' rather than 'always'.
Typicality	Is the cited evidence typical or representative?	If an author makes a claim about a whole group but the evidence is based on a small or biased sample of that group, the evidence is not "typical." Similar problems stem from relying just on personal experiences (anecdotal evidence) and from "cherry picking" data by citing only the parts that support a conclusion while ignoring parts that might challenge it.
Accuracy	Is the cited evidence up to date and accurate?	Authors using polls, studies and statistics must ask whether the data were produced in a biased way and also ask whether the sample was large and representative of its target population so that results were outside the "margin of error." (**Margin of error**: If a sample is too small or not well chosen, results may be meaningless because they may represent random variation.)
Relevance	Is the cited evidence directly relevant to the claim(s) it is being used to support?	An author may supply lots of evidence, but the evidence may support something different from what the person is actually claiming. If the evidence is not relevant to the claim, the author may need to modify or qualify the claim—or even to acknowledge that the claim is indefensible.

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5.12.11: Manipulative Appeals to Logos

Learning Objectives

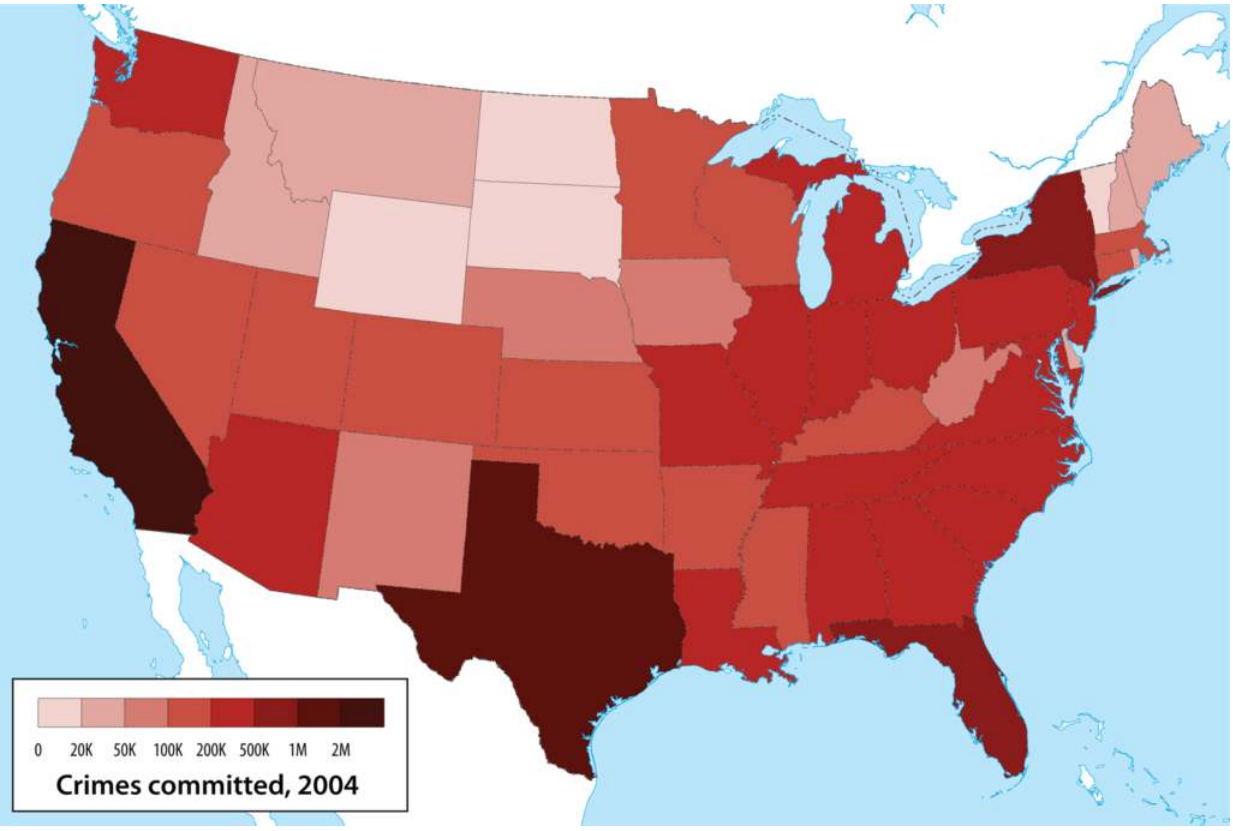
- Recognize appeals to logos
- Evaluate appeals to logos

Diagramming an argument can help you determine if an appeal to logos is manipulative. Are the premises true? Does the conclusion follow logically from the premises? Is there sufficient, typical, accurate, and relevant evidence to support inductive 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 our idea of the dissolution of the American family.

practice

Study the mapped visualization of crime in the U.S. below and answer the questions about how it appeals to logos.



https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...sessments/5612

The misrepresentation of information or data is often accompanied by logical fallacies. Below are some fallacies that misuse appeals to logos or attempt to manipulate the logic of an argument:

Fallacy	Description	Example

Hasty generalization	jumping to conclusions based upon an unrepresentative sample or insufficient evidence.	“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).	“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.	“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.	“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	“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.	“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.	“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.	“My opponent says I am weak on crime, but I have been one of the most reliable participants in city council meetings.”
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.	“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!”

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5.12.12: Kairos and Logos

Learning Objectives

- Recognize appeals to logos
- Evaluate appeals to logos

definition

Kairos: a time when conditions are right for the accomplishment of a crucial action; the opportune and decisive moment.

From Ancient Greek: καιρός (kairós).

Kairos is the fourth rhetorical appeal, but it is almost always best explained in context with the other rhetorical appeals.

In his article “Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric,” Aaron Hess provides a definition of kairos for the present day that bridges the two classical applications. Hess addresses Poulakos’s view that, “In short, kairos dictates that what is said must be said at the right time.” He suggests that kairos also considers appropriateness. According to Hess, kairos can either be understood as “the decorum or propriety of any given moment and speech act, implying a reliance on the given or known” or as “the opportune, spontaneous, or timely.”

Kairos is an important part of appeals to logos because all logical information is contextual. In other words, you can not use data from a 1960s study about cancer treatment without contextualizing it: it is no longer timely in 2017.

The appropriateness of information is also related to kairos. Even if information is logical and factually correct, it may not always be timely to present it. You must evaluate the rhetorical situation in order to balance the appeals appropriately, and an important part of the rhetorical situation is the time.

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5.12.13: Introduction to Pathos

What you'll learn to do: recognize and evaluate appeals to pathos

An appeal to pathos is an appeal to someone's emotions. For example, ads for unhealthy fast food are meant to appeal to your sense of hunger and your cravings, not to your logic that warns against such cuisine. We are exposed to appeals to emotions on an almost constant basis, so it is easy to become numb to such tactics; however, it is important to be aware of such rhetorical strategies both as readers and writers. As a reader, you should be able to analyze how some artifacts turn up the pathos to persuade; as a writer, you need to be careful not to overly rely on pathos as an attempt to sway readers. Remember that while some people may lean heavily on their emotions, others will not be persuaded by strong appeals to pathos, and you will need to consider how to reach them.

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5.12.14: Appeals to Pathos

Learning Objective

- Recognize appeals 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 his or 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 or her audience (however, academic writing moves beyond reliance solely on appeals to pathos).

When you evaluate pathos, you are asking whether an a piece of writing, a speech, etc. arouses the audience's interest and sympathy. You are looking for the elements 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 or her 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 the same feelings or attitudes. For example, in an argument about the First Amendment, does the author write as if he or she takes it for granted that the audience is religious?

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5.12.15: Manipulative Appeals to Pathos

Learning Objectives

- Recognize appeals to pathos
- Evaluate appeals 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 gaining an audience's attention for an argument using evidence and reason to present the 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 being used effectively.

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 credibility (ethos) and must supply reasons and evidence (logos) in support of their positions. An author who essentially replaces logos and ethos with pathos alone is risking losing his or her audience.

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

Fallacy	Description	Example
Appeal to fear:	using scare tactics; emphasizing threats or exaggerating possible dangers.	"Without this additional insurance, you could find yourself broke and homeless."
Appeal to guilt/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.	"I know I missed assignments, but if you fail me, I will lose my financial aid and have to drop out."
Appeal to popularity	urging audience to follow a course of action because "everyone does it."	"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.	"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.	This fallacy is referred to in the sentence "That politician always wraps himself in the flag."

Appeal to Tradition	people have been done it a certain way for a long time; assumes that what has been customary in past is correct and proper.	“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 God terms, devil terms, euphemisms, and dysphemisms.	Example: In the sentence “Cutting access to food stamps would encourage personal responsibility,” the god term is “personal responsibility.” It might seem as if it would be hard to argue against “personal responsibility” or related god 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.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Persuasive Writing

At school, at work, and in everyday life, argument is one of main ways we exchange ideas with one another. Academics, business people, scientists, and other professionals all make arguments to determine what to do or think, or to solve a problem by enlisting others to do or believe something they otherwise would not. Not surprisingly, then, argument dominates writing, and training in argument writing is essential for all college students.

This chapter will explore how to define argument, how to talk about argument, and how to write an argument of your own.

6.1: What is Argument?
6.2: What are the Components and Vocabulary of Argument?
6.3: Persuasion
6.4: Persuasive Essays
6.5: Different Types of Arguments
6.6: Features of an Argument
6.7: Failures in Evidence- When “Lots of Quotes” Can’t Save a Paper
6.8: Basic Structure and Content of Argument
6.9: Toulmin- Dissecting the Everyday Argument
6.10: Rogerian Argument
6.11: On the Other Hand- The Role of Antithetical Writing in First Year Composition Courses
6.12: Module- Academic Argument
6.12.1: Audience Awareness
6.12.2: Tone, Language, and Appeal
6.12.3: Introduction to Rebuttal and Refutation of Counterargument
6.12.4: Formula for Refutation and Rebuttal
6.12.5: Further Your Understanding- Refutation and Rebuttal
6.12.6: Putting It Together- Academic Argument
6.12.7: Why It Matters- Academic Argument
6.12.8: Introduction to Argumentative Thesis Statements
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6.12.10: Practice- Argumentative Thesis Statements
6.12.11: Introduction to Logical Fallacies
6.12.12: Common Logical Fallacies
6.12.13: Spotting Logical Fallacies
6.12.14: Introduction to Building Common Ground
6.12.15: Audience Analysis

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6.1: What is Argument?

All people, including you, make arguments on a regular basis. When you make a claim and then support the claim with reasons, you are making an argument. Consider the following:

The two main models of argument desired in college courses as part of the training for academic or professional life are **rhetorical argument** and **academic argument**. If rhetoric is the study of the craft of writing and speaking, particularly writing or speaking designed to convince and persuade, the student studying **rhetorical argument** focuses on how to create an argument that convinces and persuades effectively. To that end, the student must understand how to think broadly about argument, the particular vocabulary of argument, and the logic of argument. The close sibling of rhetorical argument is academic argument, argument used to discuss and evaluate ideas, usually within a professional field of study, and to convince others of those ideas. In **academic argument**, interpretation and research play the central roles.

However, it would be incorrect to say that academic argument and rhetorical argument do not overlap. Indeed, they do, and often. A psychologist not only wishes to prove an important idea with research, but she will also wish to do so in the most effective way possible. A politician will want to make the most persuasive case for his side, but he should also be mindful of data that may support his points. *Thus, throughout this chapter, when you see the term* ***argument*** *, it refers to a broad category including both* ***rhetorical*** *and* ***academic argument*** *.*

Before moving to the specific parts and vocabulary of argument, it will be helpful to consider some further ideas about what argument is and what it is not.

Argument vs. Controversy or Fight

Consumers of written texts are often tempted to divide writing into two categories: argumentative and non-argumentative. According to this view, to be argumentative, writing must have the following qualities: It has to defend a position in a debate between two or more opposing sides, it must be on a controversial topic, and the goal of such writing must be to prove the correctness of one point of view over another.

A related definition of argument implies a confrontation, a clash of opinions and personalities, or just a plain verbal fight. It implies a winner and a loser, a right side and a wrong one. Because of this understanding of the word “argument,” many students think the only type of argument writing is the debate-like position paper, in which the author defends his or her point of view against other, usually opposing, points of view.

These two characteristics of argument—as controversial and as a fight—limit the definition because arguments come in different disguises, from hidden to subtle to commanding. It is useful to look at the term “argument” in a new way. What if we think of argument as an opportunity for conversation, for sharing with others our point of view on an issue, for showing others our perspective of the world? What if we think of argument as an opportunity to connect with the points of view of others rather than defeating those points of view?

One community that values argument as a type of communication and exchange is the community of scholars. They advance their arguments to share research and new ways of thinking about topics. Biologists, for example, do not gather data and write up analyses of the results because they wish to fight with other biologists, even if they disagree with the ideas of other biologists. They wish to share their discoveries and get feedback on their ideas. When historians put forth an argument, they do so often while building on the arguments of other historians who came before them. Literature scholars publish their interpretations of different works of literature to enhance understanding and share new views, not necessarily to have one interpretation replace all others. There may be debates within any field of study, but those debates can be healthy and constructive if they mean even more scholars come together to explore the ideas involved in those debates. Thus, be prepared for your college professors to have a much broader view of argument than a mere fight over a controversial topic or two.

Argument vs. Opinion

Argument is often confused with opinion. Indeed, arguments and opinions sound alike. Someone with an opinion asserts a claim that he thinks is true. Someone with an argument asserts a claim that she thinks is true. Although arguments and opinions do sound the same, there are key distinctions between them.

1. **Arguments have rules; opinions do not**. In other words, to form an argument, you must consider whether the argument is reasonable. Is it worth making? Is it valid? Is it sound? Do all of its parts fit together logically? Opinions, on the other hand,

have no rules, and anyone asserting an opinion need not think it through for it to count as one; however, it will not count as an argument.

2. **Arguments have support; opinions do not**. If you make a claim and then stop, as if the claim itself were enough to demonstrate its truthfulness, you have asserted an opinion only. An argument must be supported, and the support of an argument has its own rules. The support must also be reasonable, relevant, and sufficient.

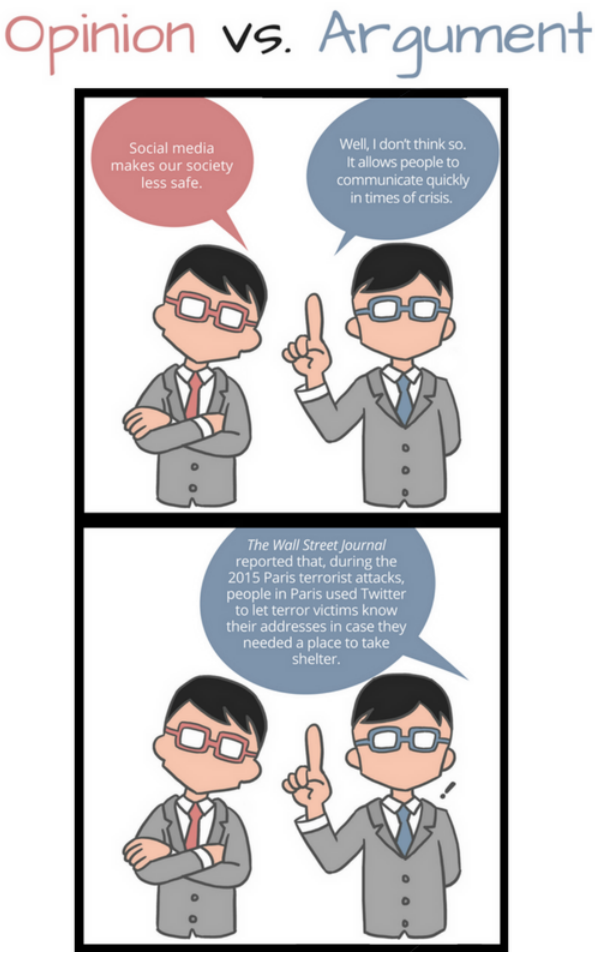


Figure 6.1.1

Argument vs. Thesis

Another point of confusion is the difference between an argument and an essay's **thesis**. For college essays, there is no essential difference between an argument and a thesis; most professors use these terms interchangeably. An argument is a claim that you must then support. The main claim of an essay is the point of the essay and provides the purpose for the essay. Thus, the main claim of an essay is also the thesis.

Consider this as well: Most formal essays center upon one main claim (the thesis) but then support that main claim with supporting evidence and arguments. The **topic sentence** of a body paragraph can be another type of argument, though a supporting one, and, hence, a narrower one. Try not to be confused when professors call both the thesis and topic sentences arguments. They are not wrong because arguments come in different forms; some claims are broad enough to be broken down into a number of supporting arguments. Many longer essays are structured by the smaller arguments that are a part of and support the main argument. Sometimes professors, when they say supporting points or supporting arguments, mean the reasons (**premises**) for the main claim (**conclusion**) you make in an essay. If a claim has a number of reasons, those reasons will form the support structure for the essay, and each reason will be the basis for the topic sentence of its body paragraph.

Argument vs. Fact

Arguments are also commonly mistaken for statements of fact. This comes about because often people privilege facts over opinions, even as they defend the right to have opinions. In other words, facts are “good,” and opinions are “bad,” or if not exactly bad, then fuzzy and thus easy to reject. However, remember the important distinction between an argument and an opinion stated above: While argument may sound like an opinion, the two are not the same. An opinion is an assertion, but it is left to stand alone with little to no reasoning or support. An argument is much stronger because it includes and demonstrates reasons and support for its claim.

As for mistaking a fact for an argument, keep this important distinction in mind: An argument must be **arguable**. In everyday life, arguable is often a synonym for doubtful. For an argument, though, arguable means that it is worth arguing, that it has a range of possible answers, angles, or perspectives: It is an answer, angle, or perspective with which a reasonable person might disagree. Facts, by virtue of being facts, are not arguable. **Facts** are statements that can be definitely proven using objective data. The statement that is a fact is absolutely valid. In other words, the statement can be pronounced as definitively true or definitively false. For example, 2 + 2 = 4. This expression identifies a verifiably true statement, or a fact, because it can be proved with objective data. When a fact is established, there is no other side, and there should be no disagreement.

The misunderstanding about facts (being inherently good) and argument (being inherently problematic because it is not a fact) leads to the mistaken belief that facts have no place in an argument. This could not be farther from the truth. First of all, most arguments are formed by analyzing facts. Second, facts provide one type of support for an argument. Thus, do not think of facts and arguments as enemies; rather, they work closely together.

Explicit vs. Implicit Arguments

Arguments can be both explicit and implicit. **Explicit arguments** contain prominent and definable thesis statements and multiple specific proofs to support them. This is common in academic writing from scholars of all fields. **Implicit arguments**, on the other hand, work by weaving together facts and narratives, logic and emotion, personal experiences and statistics. Unlike explicit arguments, implicit ones do not have a one-sentence thesis statement. Implicit arguments involve evidence of many different kinds to build and convey their point of view to their audience. Both types use rhetoric, logic, and support to create effective arguments.

Exercise 6.1.1

Go on a hunt for an implicit argument in the essay, “ **37 Who Saw Murder Didn’t Call the Police** ” (https://tinyurl.com/yc35o25x) by Martin Gansberg.

1. Read the article, and take notes on it–either using a notebook or by annotating a printed copy of the text itself. Mark or write down all the important details you find.
2. After you are finished reading, look over your notes or annotations. What do all the details add up to? Use the details you have read about to figure out what Gansberg’s implicit argument is in his essay. Write it in your own words.
3. Discuss your results with a partner or a group. Did you come up with the same argument? Have everyone explain the reasoning for his or her results.

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6.2: What are the Components and Vocabulary of Argument?

Questions are at the core of arguments. What matters is not just that you believe that what you have to say is true, but that you give others viable reasons to believe it as well—and also show them that you have considered the issue from multiple angles. To do that, build your argument out of the answers to the five questions a rational reader will expect answers to. In academic and professional writing, we tend to build arguments from the answers to these main questions:

1. What do you want me to do or think?
2. Why should I do or think that?
3. How do I know that what you say is true?
4. Why should I accept the reasons that support your claim?
5. What about this other idea, fact, or consideration?
6. How should you present your argument?

When you ask people to do or think something they otherwise would not, they quite naturally want to know why they should do so. In fact, people tend to ask the same questions. As you make a reasonable argument, you anticipate and respond to readers' questions with a particular part of argument:

1. The answer to *What do you want me to do or think?* is your **conclusion**: "I conclude that you should do or think X."
2. The answer to *Why should I do or think that?* states your **premise**: "You should do or think X because..."
3. The answer to *How do I know that what you say is true?* presents your **support**: "You can believe my reasons because they are supported by these facts..."
4. The answer to *Why should I accept that your reasons support your claim?* states your general principle of reasoning, called a **warrant**: "My specific reason supports my specific claim because whenever this general condition is true, we can generally draw a conclusion like mine."
5. The answer to *What about this other idea, fact, or conclusion?* **acknowledges** that your readers might see things differently and then **responds** to their **counterarguments**.
6. The answer to *How should you present your argument?* leads to the **point of view**, **organization**, and **tone** that you should use when making your arguments.

As you have noticed, the answers to these questions involve knowing the particular vocabulary about argument because these terms refer to specific parts of an argument. The remainder of this section will cover the terms referred to in the questions listed above as well as others that will help you better understand the building blocks of argument.

What Is a Conclusion, and What Is a Premise?

The root notion of an argument is that it convinces us that something is true. What we are being convinced of is the **conclusion**. An example would be this claim:

Littering is harmful.

A reason for this conclusion is called the **premise**. Typically, a conclusion will be supported by two or more **premises**. Both premises and conclusions are **statements**. Some premises for our littering conclusion might be these:

Littering is dangerous to animals.

Littering is dangerous to humans.

Thus, to be clear, understand that an argument asserts that the writer's claim is true in *two* main parts: the **premises** of the argument exist to show that the **conclusion** is true.

Tip

Be aware of the other words to indicate a conclusion– *claim*, *assertion*, *point* –and other ways to talk about the premise– *reason*, *factor*, the *why*. Also, do not confuse this use of the word conclusion with a conclusion paragraph for an essay.

What Is a Statement?

A **statement** is a type of sentence that can be true or false and corresponds to the grammatical category of a **declarative sentence**. For example, the sentence,

The Nile is a river in northeastern Africa,

is a statement because it makes sense to inquire whether it is true or false. (In this case, it happens to be true.) However, a sentence is still a statement, even if it is false. For example, the sentence,

The Yangtze is a river in Japan,

is still a statement; it is just a false statement (the Yangtze River is in China). In contrast, none of the following sentences are statements:

Please help yourself to more casserole.

Don't tell your mother about the surprise.

Do you like Vietnamese pho?

None of these sentences are statements because it does not make sense to ask whether those sentences are true or false; rather, they are a request, a command, and a question, respectively. Make sure to remember the difference between sentences that are declarative statements and sentences that are not *because arguments depend on declarative statements*.

Tip

A question cannot be an argument, yet students will often pose a question at the end of an introduction to an essay, thinking they have declared their thesis. They have not. If, however, they answer that question (**conclusion**) and give some reasons for that answer (**premises**), they then have the components necessary for both an argument and a declarative statement of that argument (**thesis**).

To reiterate: All arguments are composed of premises and conclusions, both of which are types of statements. The premises of the argument provide reasons for thinking that the conclusion is true. Arguments typically involve more than one premise.

What Is Standard Argument Form?

A standard way of capturing the structure of an argument, or diagramming it, is by numbering the premises and conclusion. For example, the following represents another way to arrange the littering argument:

1. Littering is harmful
2. Litter is dangerous to animals
3. Litter is dangerous to humans

This numbered list represents an argument that has been put into **standard argument form**. A more precise definition of an argument now emerges, employing the vocabulary that is specific to academic and rhetorical arguments. An argument is a set of **statements**, some of which (the **premises**: statements 2 and 3 above) attempt to provide a reason for thinking that some other statement (the **conclusion**: statement 1) is true.

Tip

Diagramming an argument can be helpful when trying to figure out your essay's thesis. Because a thesis is an argument, putting the parts of an argument into standard form can help sort ideas. You can transform the numbered ideas into a cohesive sentence or two for your thesis once you are more certain what your argument parts are.

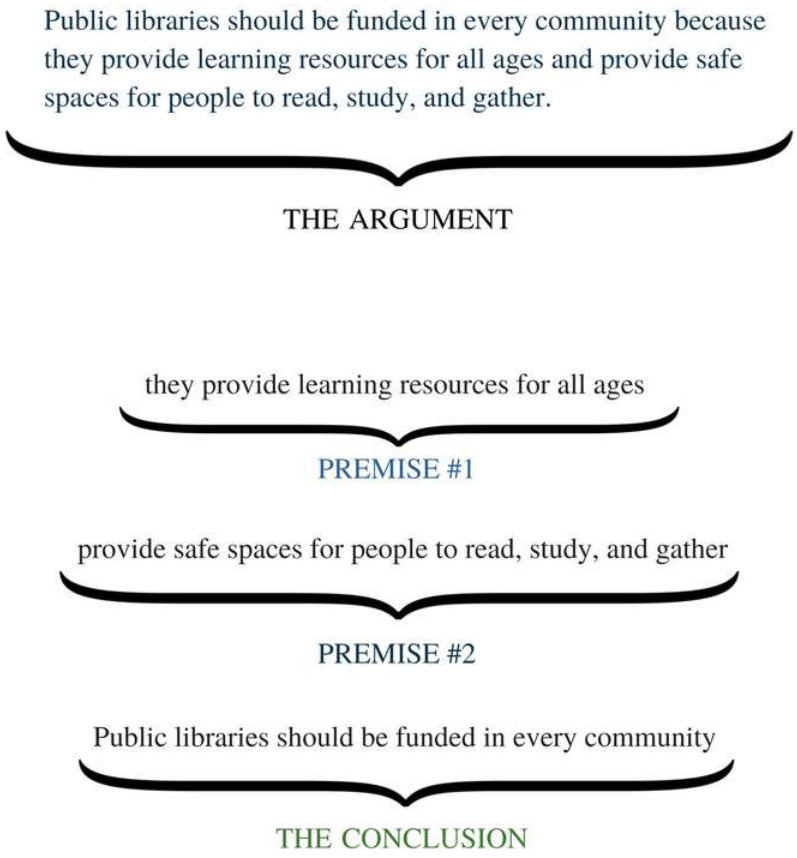


Figure 6.2.1 "Argument Diagram"

Recognizing arguments is essential to analysis and critical thinking; if you cannot distinguish between the details (the support) of a piece of writing and what those details are there to support (the argument), you will likely misunderstand what you are reading. Additionally, studying how others make arguments can help you learn how to effectively create your own.

What Are Argument Indicators?

While mapping an argument in standard argument form can be a good way to figure out and formulate a thesis, identifying arguments by other writers is also important. The best way to identify an argument is to ask whether a claim exists (in statement form) that a writer justifies by reasons (also in statement form). Other identifying markers of arguments are key words or phrases that are premise indicators or conclusion indicators. For example, recall the littering argument, reworded here into a single sentence (much like a thesis statement):

Littering is harmful *because* it is dangerous to both animals and humans.

The word "because" here is a **premise indicator**. That is, "because" indicates that what follows is a reason for thinking that littering is bad. Here is another example:

The student plagiarized *since* I found the exact same sentences on a website, and the website was published more than a year before the student wrote the paper.

In this example, the word "since" is a premise indicator because what follows is a statement that is clearly intended to be a reason for thinking that the student plagiarized (i.e., a premise). Notice that in these two cases, the premise indicators "because" and "since" are interchangeable: "because" could be used in place of "since" or "since" in the place of "because," and the meaning of the sentences would have been the same.

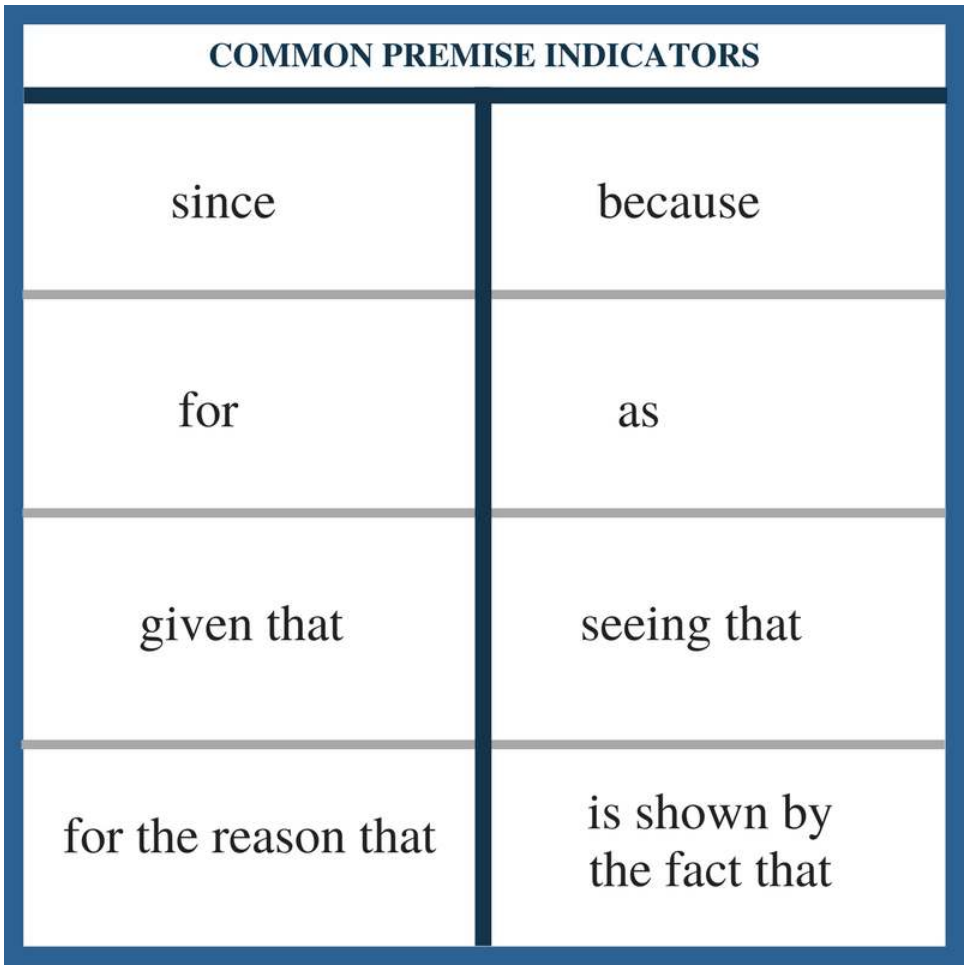


Figure 6.2.2"Common Premise Indicators"

In addition to premise indicators, there are also **conclusion indicators**. Conclusion indicators mark that what follows is the conclusion of an argument. For example,

Bob-the-arsonist has been dead for a year, *so* Bob-the-arsonist didn't set the fire at the East Lansing Starbucks last week.

In this example, the word "so" is a conclusion indicator because what follows it is a statement that someone is trying to establish as true (i.e., a conclusion). Here is another example of a conclusion indicator:

A poll administered by Gallup (a respected polling company) showed candidate X to be substantially behind candidate Y with only a week left before the vote; *therefore*, candidate Y will probably not win the election.

In this example, the word "therefore" is a conclusion indicator because what follows it is a statement that someone is trying to establish as true (i.e., a conclusion). As before, in both of these cases, the conclusion indicators "so" and "therefore" are interchangeable: "So" could be used in place of "therefore" or "therefore" in the place of "so," and the meaning of the sentences would have been the same.

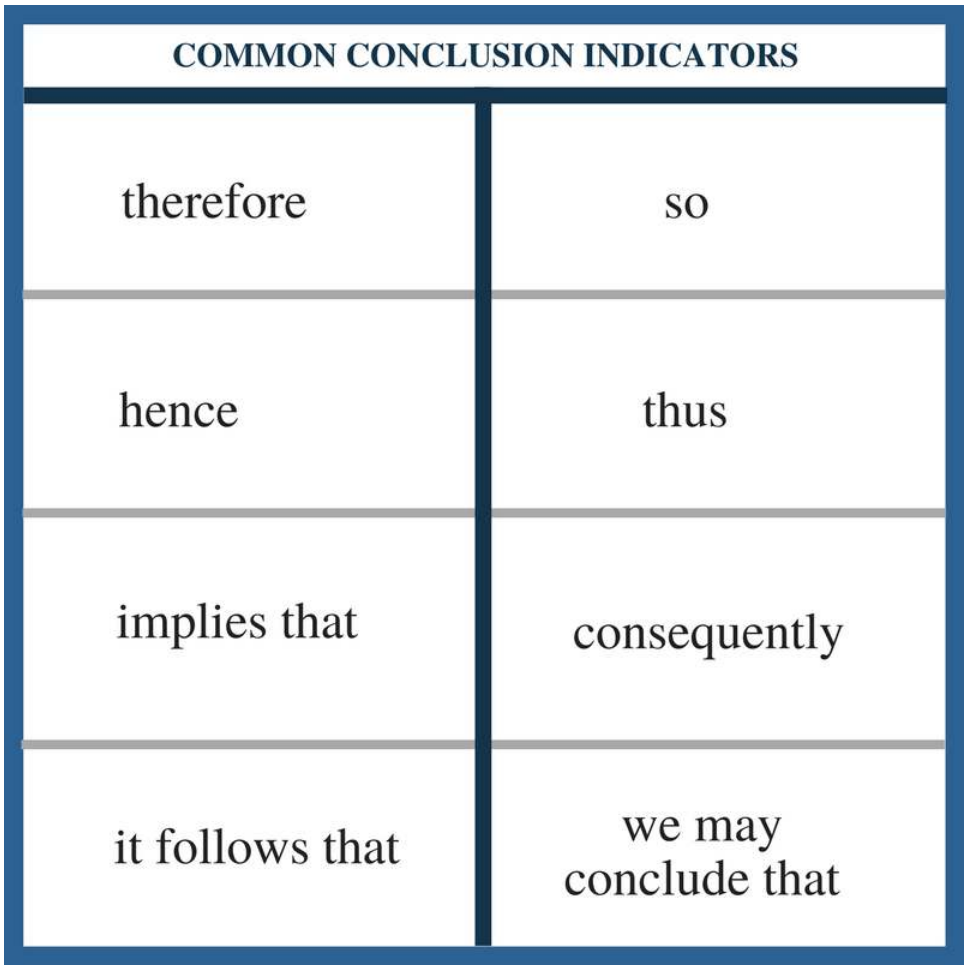


Figure 6.2.3 "Common Conclusion Indicators"

Exercise 6.2.1

Which of the following are arguments? If it is an argument, identify the conclusion (claim) of the argument. If it is not an argument, explain why not. Remember to look for the qualifying features of an argument: (1) It is a statement or series of statements, (2) it states a claim (a conclusion), and (3) it has at least one premise (reason for the claim).

1. The woman with the hat is not a witch since witches have long noses, and she doesn't have a long nose.
2. I have been wrangling cattle since before you were old enough to tie your own shoes.
3. Albert is angry with me, so he probably won't be willing to help me wash the dishes.
4. First, I washed the dishes, and then I dried them.
5. If the road weren't icy, the car wouldn't have slid off the turn.
6. Marvin isn't a fireman and isn't a fisherman, either.
7. Are you seeing the rhinoceros over there? It's huge!
8. Obesity has become a problem in the US because obesity rates have risen over the past four decades.
9. Bob showed me a graph with rising obesity rates, and I was very surprised to see how much they had risen.
10. Marvin isn't a fireman because Marvin is a Greyhound, which is a type of dog, and dogs can't be firemen.
11. What Susie told you is not the actual reason she missed her flight to Denver.
12. Carol likely forgot to lock her door this morning because she was distracted by a clown riding a unicycle while singing Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Simple Man."
13. No one who has ever gotten frostbite while climbing K2 has survived to tell about it; therefore, no one ever will.

What Constitutes Support, and What Is the Warrant?

To ensure that your argument is sound—that the premises for your conclusion are true—you must establish **support**. The burden of proof, to borrow language from law, is on the one making an argument, not on the recipient of an argument. If you wish to assert a claim, you must then also support it, and this support must be relevant, logical, and sufficient. In other words, it is important to use the right kind of evidence, to use it effectively, and to have an appropriate amount of it.

Above all, connect the evidence to the argument. This connection is the **warrant**. Evidence is not self-evident. In other words, after introducing evidence into your writing, you must demonstrate why and how this evidence supports your argument. You must explain the significance of the evidence and its function in your paper. What turns a fact or piece of information into evidence is the connection it has with a larger claim or argument: Evidence is always evidence *for* or *against* something, and you have to make that link clear.

Tip

Student writers sometimes assume that readers already know the information being written about; students may be wary of elaborating too much because they think their points are obvious. But remember, readers are not mind readers: Although they may be familiar with many of the ideas discussed, they don't know what writers want to do with those ideas unless they indicate that through explanations, organization, and transitions. Thus, when you write, be sure to explain the connections you made in your mind when you chose your evidence, decided where to place it in your paper, and drew conclusions based on it.

What Is a Counterargument?

Remember that arguments are multi-sided. As you brainstorm and prepare to present your idea and your support for it, consider other sides of the issue. These other sides are **counterarguments**. Make a list of counterarguments as you work through the writing process, and use them to build your case – to widen your idea to include a valid counterargument, to explain how a counterargument might be defeated, to illustrate how a counterargument may not withstand the scrutiny your research has uncovered, and/or to show that you are aware of and have taken into account other possibilities.

For example, you might choose the issue of declawing cats and set up your search with the question should I have my indoor cat declawed? Your research, interviews, surveys, personal experiences might yield several angles on this question: Yes, it will save your furniture and your arms and ankles. No, it causes psychological issues for the cat. No, if the cat should get outside, he will be without defense. As a writer, be prepared to address alternate arguments and to include them to the extent that it will illustrate your reasoning.

Almost anything claimed in a paper can be refuted or challenged. Opposing points of view and arguments exist in every debate. It is smart to anticipate possible objections to your arguments – and to do so will make your arguments stronger. Another term for a counterargument is **antithesis** (i.e., the opposition to a thesis). To find possible counterarguments (and keep in mind there can be many counterpoints to one claim), ask the following questions:

- Could someone draw a different conclusion from the facts or examples you present?
- Could a reader question any of your assumptions or claims?
- Could a reader offer a different explanation of an issue?
- Is there any evidence out there that could weaken your position?
- Can you offer an explanation of why a reader should question a piece of evidence or consider a different point of view?
- Can you explain how your position responds to any contradicting evidence?
- Can you put forward a different interpretation of evidence?
- Researchers have challenged these claims with…
- Critics argue that this view…
- Some readers may point to…

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, the next question can help you respond to these potential objections:

- Is it possible to concede the point of the opposition, but then challenge that point's importance/usefulness?

It may not seem likely at first, but clearly recognizing and addressing different sides of the argument, the ones that are not your own, can make your argument and paper stronger. By addressing the antithesis of your argument essay, you are showing your readers that you have carefully considered the issue and accept that there are often other ways to view the same thing.

What Are More Complex Argument Structures?

So far you have seen that an argument consists of a conclusion and a premise (typically more than one). However, often arguments and explanations have a more complex structure than just a few premises that directly support the conclusion. For example, consider the following argument:

No one living in Pompeii could have survived the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. The reason is simple: The lava was flowing too fast, and there was nowhere to go to escape it in time. Therefore, this account of the eruption, which claims to have been written by an eyewitness living in Pompeii, was not actually written by an eyewitness.

The **main conclusion** of this argument—the statement that depends on other statements as evidence but doesn't itself provide any evidence for other statements—is

A. This account of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius was not actually written by an eyewitness.

However, the argument's structure is more complex than simply having a couple of premises that provide evidence directly for the conclusion. Rather, some statements provide evidence directly for the main conclusion, but some premise statements support other premise statements which then support the conclusion.

To determine the structure of an argument, you must determine which statements support which, using premise and conclusion indicators to help. For example, the passage above contains the phrase, "the reason is…" which is a premise indicator, and it also contains the conclusion indicator, "therefore." That conclusion indicator helps identify the main conclusion, but the more important element to see is that statement A does not itself provide evidence or support for any of the other statements in the argument, which is the clearest reason statement A is the main conclusion of the argument. The next question to answer is this: Which statement most directly supports A? What most directly supports A is

B. No one living in Pompeii could have survived the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius.

However, there is also a reason offered in support of B. That reason is the following:

C. The lava from Mt. Vesuvius was flowing too fast, and there was nowhere for someone living in Pompeii to go to escape it in time.

So the main conclusion (A) is directly supported by B, and B is supported by C. Since B acts as a premise for the main conclusion but is also itself the conclusion of further premises, B is classified as an **intermediate conclusion**. What you should recognize here is that *one and the same statement can act as both a premise and a conclusion*. Statement B is a premise that supports the main conclusion (A), but it is also itself a conclusion that follows from C. Here is how to put this complex argument into standard form (using numbers this time, as is typical for diagramming arguments):

1. The lava from Mt. Vesuvius was flowing too fast, and there was nowhere for someone living in Pompeii to go to escape it in time.
2. Therefore, no one living in Pompeii could have survived the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. (from 1)
3. Therefore, this account of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius was not actually written by an eyewitness. (from 2)

Notice that at the end of statement 2 is a written indicator in parentheses (from 1), and, likewise, at the end of statement 3 is another indicator (from 2). From 1 is a shorthand way of saying, "this statement follows logically from statement 1." Use this convention as a way to keep track of an argument's structure. It may also help to think about the structure of an argument spatially, as the figure below shows:

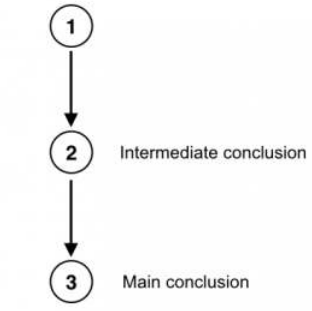


Figure 6.2.4: From Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking by Matthew Van Cleave

The main argument here (from 2 to 3) contains a **subargument**, in this case, the argument from 1 (a premise) to 2 (the intermediate conclusion). A subargument, as the term suggests, is a part of an argument that provides indirect support for the main argument. The main argument is simply the argument whose conclusion is the main conclusion.

Another type of structure that arguments can have is when two or more premises provide direct but independent support for the conclusion. Here is an example of an argument with that structure:

Wanda rode her bike to work today because when she arrived at work she had her right pant leg rolled up, which cyclists do to keep their pants legs from getting caught in the chain. Moreover, our co-worker, Bob, who works in accounting, saw her riding towards work at 7:45 a.m.

The conclusion of this argument is "Wanda rode her bike to work today"; two premises provide independent support for it: the fact that Wanda had her pant leg cuffed and the fact that Bob saw her riding her bike. Here is the argument in standard form:

1. Wanda arrived at work with her right pant leg rolled up.
2. Cyclists often roll up their right pant leg.
3. Bob saw Wanda riding her bike towards work at 7:45.
4. Therefore, Wanda rode her bike to work today. (from 1-2, 3 independently)

Again, notice that next to statement 4 of the argument is an indicator of how each part of the argument relates to the main conclusion. In this case, to avoid any ambiguity, you can see that the support for the conclusion comes independently from statements 1 and 2, on the one hand, and from statement 3, on the other hand. It is important to point out that an argument *or subargument* can be supported by one or more premises, the case in this argument because the main conclusion (4) is supported jointly by 1 and 2, and singly by 3. As before, we can represent the structure of this argument spatially, as the figure below shows:

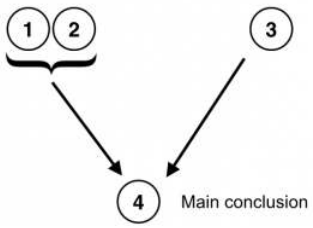


Figure 6.2.5 from Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking by Matthew Van Cleave

There are endless argument structures that can be generated from a few simple patterns. At this point, it is important to understand that arguments can have different structures and that some arguments will be more complex than others. Determining the structure of complex arguments is a skill that takes some time to master, rather like simplifying equations in math. Even so, it may help to remember that any argument structure ultimately traces back to some combination of premises, intermediate arguments, and a main conclusion.

? Exercise 6.2.2

Write the following arguments in standard form. If any arguments are complex, show how each complex argument is structured using a diagram like those shown just above.

1. There is nothing wrong with prostitution because there is nothing wrong with consensual sexual and economic interactions between adults. Moreover, there is no difference between a man who goes on a blind date with a woman, buys her dinner and then has sex with her and a man who simply pays a woman for sex, which is another reason there is nothing wrong with prostitution.

2. Prostitution is wrong because it involves women who have typically been sexually abused as children. Proof that these women have been abused comes from multiple surveys done with female prostitutes that show a high percentage of self-reported sexual abuse as children.

3. Someone was in this cabin recently because warm water was in the tea kettle and wood was still smoldering in the fireplace. However, the person couldn't have been Tim because Tim has been with me the whole time. Therefore, someone else must be in these woods.

4. Someone can be blind and yet run in the Olympic Games since Marla Runyan did it at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

5. The train was late because it had to take a longer, alternate route seeing as the bridge was out.

6. Israel is not safe if Iran gets nuclear missiles because Iran has threatened multiple times to destroy Israel, and if Iran had nuclear missiles, it would be able to carry out this threat. Furthermore, since Iran has been developing enriched uranium, it has the key component needed for nuclear weapons; every other part of the process of building a nuclear weapon is simple compared to that. Therefore, Israel is not safe.

7. Since all professional hockey players are missing front teeth, and Martin is a professional hockey player, it follows that Martin is missing front teeth. Because almost all professional athletes who are missing their front teeth have false teeth, it follows that Martin probably has false teeth.

8. Anyone who eats the crab rangoon at China Food restaurant will probably have stomach troubles afterward. It has happened to me every time; thus, it will probably happen to other people as well. Since Bob ate the crab rangoon at China Food restaurant, he will probably have stomach troubles afterward.

9. Lucky and Caroline like to go for runs in the afternoon in Hyde Park. Because Lucky never runs alone, any time Albert is running, Caroline must also be running. Albert looks like he has just run (since he is panting hard), so it follows that Caroline must have run, too.

10. Just because Linda's prints were on the gun that killed Terry and the gun was registered to Linda, it doesn't mean that Linda killed Terry since Linda's prints would certainly be on her own gun, and someone else could have stolen her gun and used it to kill Terry.

Contributors and Attributions

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6.3: Persuasion

The Purpose of Persuasive Writing

The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies that more than one opinion on the subject can be argued.

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different. An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.

Most of us feel inclined to try to win the arguments we enter. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your opinion as a valid one, not simply the right one.

Bias in Writing

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have a bias toward listening to music radio stations rather than talk radio or news programs. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view. The ideal in persuasive writing is to let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and a respectful and reasonable address of opposing sides.

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you will put forth and the better the final product will be.

The weakness of bias is when the bias begins to take over the essay—when, for example, you neglect opposing ideas, exaggerate your points, or repeatedly insert yourself ahead of the subject by using I too often. Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.

The Structure of a Persuasive Essay

The following features make up a persuasive essay:

- Introduction and thesis
- Opposing and qualifying ideas
- Strong evidence in support of claim
- A compelling conclusion

Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

Because an argument implies differing points of view on the subject, you must be sure to acknowledge those opposing ideas. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus it is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.

Try to address opposing arguments earlier rather than later in your essay. Rhetorically speaking, ordering your positive arguments last allows you to better address ideas that conflict with your own because it allows you to focus on countering those arguments. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else's. You have the last word.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. Readers will know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space. It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish. In effect, you are conceding early on that your argument is not the ultimate authority on a given topic. Such humility can go a long way toward earning credibility and trust with an audience (**ethos**). Audience members will know from the beginning that you are a reasonable writer, and they will

trust your argument as a result. For example, in the following concessionary statement, the writer advocates for stricter gun control laws, but she admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

> *Although tougher gun control laws are a powerful first step in decreasing violence in our streets, such legislation alone cannot end these problems since guns are not the only problem we face.*

Such a concession will be welcome by those who might disagree with this writer's argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be realistic in their goals and humble in their approach to get readers to listen to their ideas. See Table of Phrases of Concession for some useful phrases of concession.

Table of Phrases of Concession

although	granted that
of course	still
though	yet

? Exercise 1

Try to form a thesis for each of the following topics. Remember the more specific your thesis, the better.

- Foreign policy
- Television and advertising
- Stereotypes and prejudice
- Gender roles and the workplace
- Driving and cell phones

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Choose the thesis statement that most interests you and discuss why.

Including Strong Supporting Evidence

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

? Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, take three of the thesis statements you formed in Exercise 1 and list the types of evidence you might use in support of that thesis. Using the evidence you provided in support of the three thesis statements, come up with at least one counter-argument to each. Then write a concession statement, expressing the limits to each of your three arguments.

Using Visual Elements to Strengthen Arguments

Adding visual elements to a persuasive argument can often strengthen its persuasive effect. There are two main types of visual elements: quantitative visuals and qualitative visuals.

Quantitative visuals present data graphically. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience using reasoning (**logos**). Often we can provide information in data form to persuade the reader through logic. Quantitative visuals help display the information clearly. For example, sometimes it is easier to

understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, and line graphs are all ways of presenting quantitative data in spatial dimensions.

Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions (**pathos**). Photographs and pictorial images are examples of qualitative visuals that can create an emotional appeal. Such images often try to convey a story, and seeing an actual example can carry more power than hearing or reading about the example. For example, one image of a child suffering from malnutrition will likely have more of an emotional impact than pages dedicated to describing that same condition in writing.

Writing at Work

You will find that many of the rhetorical devices used in writing are the same ones used in the workplace. When making a business presentation, you typically have limited time to get across your idea. Providing visual elements for your audience can be an effective timesaving tool. Quantitative visuals in business presentations serve the same purpose as they do in persuasive writing. They should make logical appeals by showing numerical data in a spatial design. Qualitative visuals should be pictures that might appeal to your audience's emotions.

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6.4: Persuasive Essays

Writing a Persuasive Essay

Choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, approach the subject from an angle that interests you. Begin your essay with an engaging introduction. Your thesis should typically appear somewhere in your introduction. Be sure to have a clear thesis that states your position and previews the main points your essay will address.

Start by acknowledging and explaining points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. Also state the limits of your argument. This too helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.

Make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated. Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice.

Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis. See the sample persuasive essay at the end of this section, "The Value of Technical High Schools in Georgia's Business Marketplace," by student Elizabeth Lamoureux. Please note that this essay uses the MLA style of documentation, for which you can find guidelines at Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) website: http://owl.english.purdue.edu.

Sample Persuasive Essay

In this student paper, the student makes a persuasive case for the value of technical high schools in Georgia. As you read, pay attention to the different persuasive devices the writer uses to convince us of her position. Also note how the outline gives a structure to the paper that helps lead the reader step-by-step through the components of the argument.

Student Outline

Elizabeth Lamoureux

Dr. Cox

English 1101 Honors

April 25, 2013

Outline

Thesis: Technical high schools should be established in every county in Georgia because they can provide the technical training that companies need, can get young people into the workforce earlier, and can reduce the number of drop outs.

I. Technical high schools can provide the technical training that companies in Georgia need.
   A. Businesses can provide input regarding jobs needed in specific technical fields.
      1. Education can focus on these specific technical fields.
      2. Education can work with business to fill these positions.
   B. Businesses can provide apprenticeship programs.
      1. Apprenticeship programs can be a vital part of a student's education.
      2. Apprenticeship programs are integral to Germany's educational program, providing a realistic model for technical high schools in Georgia.

II. Technical high schools can prepare students to enter the workforce earlier.
   A. Students not interested in college can enter the workforce upon high school graduation.
      1. Students train during their high school years for their chosen profession.
      2. Students begin to work in a profession or trade where there is a need.
   B. Students can begin to earn a living upon graduation.

1. Students will become independent and self-supporting at the age of eighteen when many of their peers are still dependent upon their parents.
2. Students can make more money over the course of their lifetimes.

III. Technical high schools can reduce the number of drop outs.

A. Students would stay in school because they take courses that they enjoy.

1. Students are more motivated to take courses in which they have an interest.
2. Students will find both core and specialized classes more interesting and valuable when they can see the practical application of the subjects.

B. Students would no longer need to drop out to support their families.

1. Students would be able to earn a living wage while still taking classes that would eventually lead to full-time employment.
2. Students would learn financial skills through experience with money management.

Student Essay

Elizabeth Lamoureux

Dr. Cox

English 1101 Honors

April 25, 2013

The Value of Technical High Schools in Georgia's Business Marketplace

Businesses need specialized workers; young people need jobs. It seems like this would be an easy problem to solve. However, business and education are not communicating with each other. To add to this dilemma, emphasis is still put on a college education for everyone. Samuel Halperin, study director of the Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship for the W. T. Grant Foundation, co-authored two reports: "The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America" and "The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families." Halperin states: "While the attention of the nation was focused on kids going to college . . . the truth is that 70 percent of our adults never earn a college degree" (qtd. in Rogers). According to an article in Issues in Science and Technology, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that there will be more need for skills obtained through "community colleges, occupational training, and work experience" (Lerman). As Anne C. Lewis points out, although the poor job situation is recognized as detrimental to American youth, President Bush tried to get rid of career and technical education (CTE) and "promote strictly academic programs." Luckily, Congress did not support it (Lewis 5). The figure for U.S. teen joblessness in October 2009 was 27.6 percent, the highest since World War II (Karaim). According to Thomas E. Persing, Americans are "disregarding the 50 percent who enter college and fail to graduate. . . ." Since everyone does not want or need to go to college, young people need an alternative choice, namely, technical high schools. Technical high schools should be established in every county in Georgia because they can provide the technical training that companies need, can get young people into the work force earlier, and can reduce the number of drop outs.

Technical high schools provide students with the technical training that companies need. By getting input from businesses on exactly what their specialized needs are, school systems could adapt their curricula to accommodate the needs of businesses. According to an article in Issues in Science and Technology, "employers report difficulty in recruiting workers with adequate skills." The article goes on to say that "the shortage of available skills is affecting their ability to serve customers, and 84% of the firms say that the K-12 school system is not doing a good job preparing students for the workplace" (Lerman). Education can work with businesses to provide them with the workforce they need, and students can learn the skills they need through apprenticeship programs.

Business can be further involved by providing these apprenticeship programs, which can be a vital part of a student's education. Currently, Robert Reich, economist and former Secretary of Labor, and Richard Riley, Secretary of Education, have spoken up for apprenticeship programs (Persing). In these programs, not only do students learn job-specific skills, but they also learn other skills for success in the work place, such as "communication, responsibility, teamwork, allocating resources, problem-solving, and finding information" (Lerman). Businesses complain that the current educational system is failing in this regard and that students enter the workforce without these skills.

The United States could learn from other countries. Apprenticeship programs are integral to Germany's educational program, for example. Because such large numbers of students in a wide array of fields take advantage of these programs, the stigma of not

attending college is reduced. Timothy Taylor, the Conversable Economist, explains that most German students complete this program and still have the option to pursue a postsecondary degree. Many occupations are represented in this program, including engineering, nursing, and teaching. Apprenticeship programs can last from one to six years and provide students with a wage for learning. This allows both business and student to compete in the market place. According to Julie Rawe, "under Germany's earn-while-you-learn system, companies are paying 1.6 million young adults to train for about 350 types of jobs. . . ."

A second important reason technical high schools should be promoted in Georgia is that they prepare students to enter the work force earlier. Students not interested in college enter the work force upon high school graduation or sooner if they have participated in an apprenticeship or other cooperative program with a business. Students train during their high school years for their chosen profession and often work for the company where they trained. This ensures that students begin to work in a profession or trade where there is a need.

Another positive factor is that jobs allow students to earn a living upon graduation or before. Even though students are considered adults at eighteen, many cannot support themselves. The jobs available to young people are primarily minimum wage jobs which do not provide them with enough resources to live independently. One recent study indicates that the income gap is widening for young people, and "In March 1997, more than one-fourth of out-ofschool young adults who were working full-time were earning less than the poverty line income standard of just over $16,000 annually for a family of four" ("The Forgotten Half Revisited"). Conversely, by entering the work force earlier with the skills businesses need, young people make more money over their lifetimes. Robert I. Lerman considers the advantages:

> *Studies generally find that education programs with close links to the world of work improve earnings. The earnings gains are especially solid for students unlikely to attend or complete college. Cooperative education, school enterprises, and internship or apprenticeship increased employment and lowered the share of young men who are idle after high school.*

Young people can obviously profit from entering the work force earlier.

One of the major benefits of promoting technical high schools in Georgia is that they reduce the number of dropouts. According to an article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the figure for dropouts for the Atlanta metro area is about thirty-four percent (McCaffrey and Badertscher A16). The statistic for Germany's dropout rate is less than nine percent (Rawe). As Rawe maintains, students stay in school because they cannot get the job if they do not have the diploma. Beyond the strong incentive of a job, students are more motivated to take courses in which they have an interest. In addition to the specialized career classes, students are still required to take core classes required by traditional high schools. However, practical application of these subjects makes them more interesting and more valuable to the students.

Another reason students drop out is to support their families. By participating in a program in which they are paid a wage and then entering that job full time, they no longer need to drop out for this reason. It is necessary for many students to contribute financially to the family: by getting a job earlier, they can do this. Joining the work force early also provides students with financial skills gained through experience with money management.

The belief of most Americans that everyone needs to have a college education is outdated. The United States needs skilled employees at all levels, from the highly technical to the practical day to day services society needs to sustain its current standard of living. Germany is doing this through its apprenticeship programs which have proven to be economically successful for both businesses and workers. If the State of Georgia put technical high schools in every county, businesses would get employees with the skills they need; young people would get into good paying jobs earlier, and schools would have fewer dropouts.

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6.5: Different Types of Arguments

Written arguments–whether in essay or some other form–come in many different types. Most arguments involve one or more of the **rhetorical modes**. Once again, rhetoric is the study and application of effective writing techniques. There are a number of standard rhetorical modes of writing—structural and analytical models that can be used effectively to suit different writing situations. The rhetorical modes include, but are not limited to, narration, description, comparison, cause and effect, classification, process analysis, definition, and persuasion.

Arguments of Persuasion

One of the most common forms of argument is that of **persuasion**, which was discussed earlier in this chapter. Often standardized tests will provide writing prompts for persuasive arguments. On some level, all arguments have a persuasive element because the goal of the argument is to persuade the reader to take the writer's claim seriously. Many arguments, however, exist primarily to introduce new research and interpretation whereas persuasive arguments expressly operate to change someone's mind about an issue or a person.

A common type of persuasive essay is an **Op-Ed article**. Included in the opinion section of a newspaper, these articles are more appropriately called argument essays because most authors strive not only to make explicit claims but also to support their claims, sometimes even with researched evidence. These articles are often well-designed persuasive essays, written to convince readers of the writer's way of thinking.

In addition to essays, other forms of persuasive writing exist. One common and important example is the **job letter**, where you must persuade others to believe in your merits as a worker and performer so that you might be hired.

In a persuasive essay, you should be sure to do the following:

- Clearly articulate your claim and the main reasons for it. Avoid forming a thesis based on a negative claim. For example, "The hourly minimum wage is not high enough for the average worker to live on." This is probably a true statement, but persuasive arguments should make a positive case because a negative is hard to prove. That is, the thesis statement should focus on how the hourly minimum wage is too low or insufficient.
- Anticipate and address counterarguments. Think about your audience and the counterarguments they would mostly likely have. Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. They know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space.
- Make sure your support comes in many different forms. Use logical reasoning and the rhetorical appeals, but also strive for concrete examples from your own experience and from society.
- Keep your tone courteous, but avoid being obsequious. In other words, shamelessly appealing to your readers' vanity will likely ring false. Aim for respectful honesty.
- Avoid the urge to win the argument. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your claim as a sound one, not simply the right one.

Tip

Because argument writing is designed to convince readers of an idea they may not have known before or a side of an issue they may not agree with, you must think carefully about the attitude you wish to convey as you advance your argument. The overall attitude of a piece of writing is its **tone**, and it comes from the words you choose. In argument writing, strive for the following:

- **Confidence** —The reader needs to know that you believe in what you say, so be confident. Avoid hedgy and apologetic language. However, be careful not to cross the line from confidence to overconfidence. Arrogance can rebuff your readers, even if they agree with you.
- **Neutrality** —While you may advocate for one side or way of thinking, you still must demonstrate that you are being as objective as you can in your analysis and assessment. Avoid loaded terms, buzzwords, and overly emotional language.
- **Courtesy and fairness** —Particularly when dealing with any counterarguments, you want your tone to reveal that you have given other points of view due consideration. Avoid being smug, snide, or harshly dismissive of other ideas.

Sample Writing Assignment 1

Find an Op-Ed article from one of the major US newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, or the *LA Times*. Then, do the following:

1. Prewriting Work: Read the article carefully, taking notes or annotating it. Be sure to find the main argument and map the support used by the author, i.e., how the author is trying to persuade you. Note any use of rhetorical appeals, expert testimony, and research.
2. Write a paragraph summary of the article. Include the main argument and its support. Explain the different types of support used by the author (rhetorical appeals, expert testimony, and research).
3. In a paragraph, devise and explain your own counterargument(s) to the author's thesis.
4. In a paragraph, explain what kind of support you would use for your counterargument. What rhetorical appeals would you use? What experts might you call on? Do you think you would need to do research and if so, on what?

Sample Writing Assignment 2

Write a job letter. As you design it, be sure to do the following:

1. Use formal letter format. Be sure to include these elements: your address, the address of the job you're applying to (or the department you are applying to), the date you send the letter, a greeting, the letter content in coherent paragraphs (single-spaced paragraphs with a double space in between paragraphs), a sign off, any additional information (your phone and/or email address). For some visual examples of what this would look like, do a Google image search for "job letter format."
2. Prewriting Work 1: Imagine a job you would like to apply for. Ask yourself the following questions and brainstorm answers to them: "What skills would I need to have for this job, and which of those skills do I have?" "What educational background would be required, and can I show that I fulfill the requirements?" "What experience might the hiring committee want to me to have, and do I have any experience that would be relevant?"
3. Prewriting Work 2: Take the notes you have come up with and add as many specific details as you can. If you believe you do have relevant skills, what are they, specifically? Where did you get those skills, specifically? How long have you had those skills, specifically? Do you have examples where you have shown excellence with those skills, specifically?
4. Drafting: Shape your details into three paragraphs organized by issue: skills, education, and experience. Be specific, include a couple examples per paragraph, and be succinct in your delivery.
5. Proofread carefully. First of all, excellent sentence composition, punctuation, and spelling communicate your seriousness to those who might hire you. Mistakes make you look sloppy and make it easy for them to toss your letter on the rejection pile. Second, watch word choice. Choose specific over general words as much as possible (you say you are a hard worker, but what does that mean, practically speaking?). Make sure you avoid clichés and overly gushy sentiment ("I'm passionate about people!"). Finally, proofread for tone. Strive for courteousness and objectivity. Make it seem like you are being objective about your own abilities.

Arguments of Evaluation

If you have ever answered a question about your personal take on a book or movie or television show or piece of music, you have given a **review**. Most times, these reviews are somewhat hasty and based on initial or shallow impressions. However, if you give thought to your review, if you explain more carefully what you liked or didn't like and why, if you bring in specific examples to back up your points, then you have moved on to an argument of evaluation. Reviews of film, books, music, food, and other aspects of taste and culture represent the most familiar type of argument of evaluation. The main objective of an **argument of evaluation** is to render a critical judgment on the merits of something.

Another common argument of evaluation is the **performance review**. If you have ever held a job, you know what it feels like to be on the receiving end of such a review; your timeliness and productivity and attitude are scrutinized to determine if you have been a good worker or need to worry about looking for another job. If you are in any sort of supervisory position, you will be the one writing and delivering those reviews, and your own supervisor will want to know that you have logical justification and evidence for your judgments.

For all types of reviews or evaluation arguments, make sure to plan for the following:

- Declare your overall judgment of the subject under review—good, bad, or somewhere in between. This is your conclusion or thesis.

- Lay out the criteria for your judgment. In other words, your review must be based on logical criteria—i.e., the standards by which you evaluate something. For example, if you are reviewing a film, reasonable criteria would include acting, writing, storytelling, directing, cinematography, music, and special effects. If you are evaluating an employee, that criteria will change and more likely involve punctuality, aspects of job performance, and overall attitude on the job.
- Make sure to evaluate each criteria and provide evidence. Draw your evidence from what you are reviewing, and use as many specific examples as you can. In a movie review in which you think the acting quality was top notch, give examples of a particular style that worked well or lines delivered effectively or emotions realistically conveyed.
- Use concrete language. A review is only an argument if we can reasonably see—from examples and your explanations—how you arrived at your judgment. Vague or circular language ("I liked it because it was just really good!") will keep your evaluation at the opinion level only, preventing it from being taken seriously as an argument.
- Keep the tone respectful—even if you ultimately did not like the subject of your review. Be as objective as you can when giving your reasons. Insulting language detracts from the seriousness of your analysis and makes your points look like personal attacks.



Figure 6.5.1: Roger Ebert

Roger Ebert (1942-2013), a movie reviewer for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, was once one of the most famous movie critics in America. His reviews provide excellent examples of the argument of evaluation.

Consider his review (https://tinyurl.com/y82ylaav) of the 2009 film *Avatar* and note how clearly he declares his judgments, how he makes his reader aware of just what standards he uses for judgment (his criteria), and how he uses a wealth of examples and reasons to back his critiques (although he is careful to avoid spoilers, the review went to print as the movie was coming out).

Sample Writing Assignment 3

Write a brief review of your first job. How would you rate that experience, and what would your rating be based on?

1. Declare your overall judgment of your job experience. This is your main claim.
2. Come up with at least four criteria for evaluation. Give your judgment for each criteria. Include at least two specific examples to support each evaluation, and explain the logic of your support.
3. Proofread for tone, making sure to look for any words that would cause a reader to think your critique was unfair or hostile. For example, even if you loathed your first job, treat it dispassionately, like you are a social scientist putting that work experience under a microscope. (This might allow you to say, for example, that although the job was dull and repetitive, it gave you some useful experience.)

Sample Writing Assignment 4

Evaluate a source that you plan to use for a research project. Explain what type of source you have (website? journal article? book? newspaper article?), and declare your source to be credible or not, using the following criteria:

1. Author's credentials. First of all, are the authors named? Can you find out anything about them, like degrees and professional information? If you cannot find anything, how does that affect credibility? If you can find information, how does that information show credibility or lack of it?
2. Publication information and process. Was the article or book peer reviewed? Was it online or in print? Did you find it through a database or a Google search? Who funded publication? Explain what the results of these questions tell you about the source's credibility.

3. The use of support. Does the source have footnotes or endnotes? A bibliography? Links to different articles? In other words, how carefully is the author trying to back up his or her claims?

Arguments of Fact and Explanation

In the beginning of this chapter, arguments were shown to be distinct from facts. Facts are not arguable, they do not have "two sides," and they are not up for debate. However, as we well know, people disagree with facts all the time. We wouldn't have a nonsense term like "alternative facts" otherwise. We do, however, have arguments that deal with this scenario: **arguments of fact and explanation**. Arguments of fact seek to establish, often in the face of doubters, *that* a fact is indeed true. Arguments of explanation establish *why* that fact is true. Not surprisingly, these arguments often go hand in hand, and they lie primarily in the domain of the research paper.

Arguments of Fact: Many times, the goal of giving an argument is simply to establish that the conclusion is true. For example, to convince someone that obesity rates are rising in the US, the writer should cite evidence such as studies from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The studies cited would function as premises for the conclusion that obesity rates are rising:

Obesity is on the rise in the US because multiple studies carried out by the CDC and NIH have consistently shown a rise in obesity over the last four decades.

Putting this simple argument into standard form would look like this:

1. Multiple studies by the CDC and NIH have consistently shown a rise in obesity over the last four decades. (**premises**)
2. Therefore, obesity is on the rise in the US. (**conclusion**)

The standard form argument clearly distinguishes the premise from the conclusion and shows how the conclusion is supposed to be supported by the evidence offered in the premise. Again, the goal of this simple argument would be to convince someone that the conclusion is *true*. However, sometimes we already know that a statement or claim is true, and we are trying to establish *why* it is true rather than *that* it is true.

Arguments of Explanation: An argument that attempts to show *why* its conclusion is true is an explanation. Contrast the previous example with the following:

The reason that the rate of obesity is on the rise in the US is that the foods we most often consume over the past four decades have increasingly contained high levels of sugar and low levels of dietary fiber. Because eating foods high in sugar and low in fiber triggers the insulin system to start storing those calories as fat, it follows that people who consume foods high in sugar and low in fiber will tend to store more of the calories consumed as fat.

This passage gives an explanation for *why* obesity is on the rise in the US. Unlike the earlier example, here it is taken for granted that obesity *is* on the rise in the US. That is the claim whose truth the author must explain. The obesity explanation can also be put into standard form just like any other argument:

1. Over the past four decades, Americans have increasingly consumed foods high in sugar and low in fiber. (**premise**)
2. Consuming foods high in sugar and low in fat triggers the insulin system to start storing those calories as fat. (**premise**)
3. When people store more calories as fat, they tend to become obese. (**premise**)
4. Therefore, the rate of obesity is on the rise in the US. (**conclusion**)

Notice that in this explanation, the premises (1-3) attempt to explain *why* the conclusion is true, rather than a reason for thinking *that* the conclusion is true. That is, in an argument of explanation, we assume that what we are trying to explain (i.e., the conclusion) is true. In this case, the premises are supposed to show why we should *expect* or *predict* that the conclusion is true. Explanations often give us an *understanding* of why the conclusion is true.

Arguments of Interpretation

Arguments of interpretation come mainly in the form of **critical analysis** writing. Scholars and students use critical analysis to understand a text more deeply; therefore, it is common in disciplines in which texts are the main objects of study—literature, philosophy, and history. However, we can also think of critical analysis as any analysis where someone takes raw data—from texts, from objects and images, from laboratory experiments, from surveys of people—and analyzes that data to come up with what they mean. The "what it all means" is an **interpretation**. The argument in critical analysis writing is the interpretation of the data. This must be a logical interpretation with the data also used to support the interpretation through reasoning and examples.

The guidelines for analyzing data are determined by the experts in those areas. Scholars of the life, earth, and physical sciences; the social sciences; and the humanities gather all sorts of different data. When writing up an interpretation of that data, writers and researchers should follow the models and standards provided by experts in those fields of study. In college, professors are important sources of these models and standards.

In the humanities, particularly in literature, there are generally four ways (or perspectives) for analyzing a text: writing from the perspective of a **reader**, writing as if the text were an **object of study**, writing about or from the perspective of an **author**, and writing about where a text fits into a particular **context**.

The process of critical analysis is dependent on **close reading** of the data or text and is an analytical process in which the writer moves from analyzing the details of the text to a broader conclusion that is logically based on those details. What can confuse a lot of students is that formal essay structure is must be framed by the conclusion, not the details: They must establish the main claim immediately, and then use the reasons for the claim to organize the details in each body paragraph. For more on close reading, see Chapter 1.

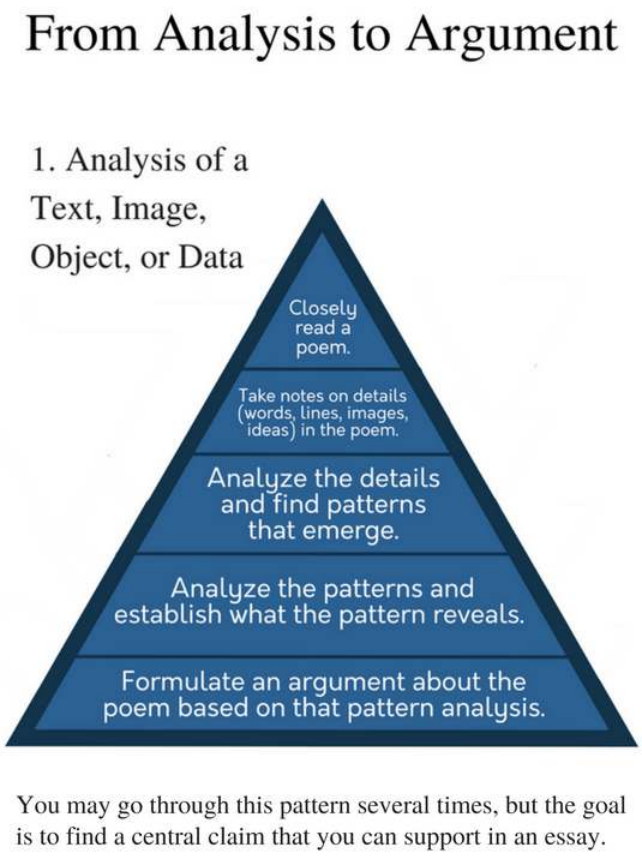


Figure 6.5.2 From Analysis to Argument

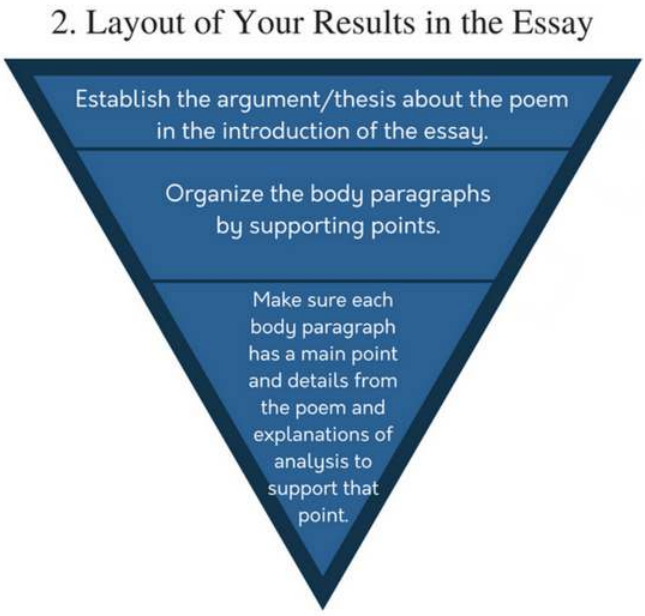


Figure 6.5.3 From Argument to Essay

Rogerian Argument

The Rogerian argument, inspired by the influential psychologist Carl Rogers, aims to find compromise or common ground about an issue. If, as stated in the beginning of the chapter, academic or rhetorical argument is not merely a two-sided debate that seeks a winner and a loser, the Rogerian argument model provides a structured way to move beyond the win-lose mindset. Indeed, the Rogerian model can be employed to deal effectively with controversial arguments that have been reduced to two opposing points of view by forcing the writer to confront opposing ideas and then work towards a common understanding with those who might disagree.

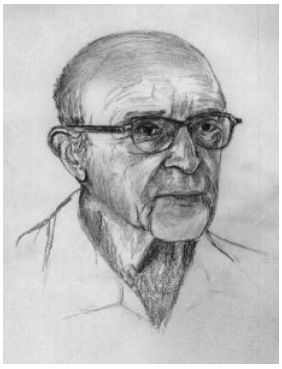


Figure 6.5.4 Carl Ransom Rogers

The following are the basic parts of a Rogerian Argument:

1. **Introduction**: Introduce the issue under scrutiny in a non-confrontational way. Be sure to outline the main sides in the debate. Though there are always more than two sides to a debate, Rogerian arguments put two in stark opposition to one another. Crucially, be sure to indicate the overall purpose of the essay: to come to a **compromise** about the issue at hand. If this intent is not stated up front, the reader may be confused or even suspect manipulation on the part of the writer, i.e., that the writer is massaging the audience just to win a fight. Be advised that the Rogerian essay uses an inductive reasoning structure, so *do not* include your thesis in your introduction. You will build toward the thesis and then include it in your conclusion. Once again, state the *intent* to compromise, but do not yet state what the compromise is.

2. **Side A**: Carefully map out the main claim and reasoning for the **opposing side** of the argument first. The writer's view should never really come first because that would defeat the purpose of what Rogers called **empathetic listening**, which guides the overall approach to this type of argument. By allowing the opposing argument to come first, you communicate to the reader that you are

willing to respectfully consider another's view on the issue. Furthermore, you invite the reader to then give you the same respect and consideration when presenting your own view. Finally, presenting the opposition first can help those readers who would side against you to ease into the essay, keeping them invested in the project. If you present your own ideas first, you risk polarizing those readers from the start, which would then make them less amenable to considering a compromise by the end of the essay. You can listen to Carl Rogers himself discuss the importance of empathy on YouTube(https://youtu.be/2dLsgpHw5x0, transcript **here**).

3. **Side B**: Carefully go over **your side** of the argument. When mapping out this side's claim and support, be sure that it parallels that of Side A. In other words, make sure not to raise entirely new categories of support, or there can be no way to come to a compromise. Make sure to maintain a non-confrontational tone; for example, avoid appearing arrogant, sarcastic, or smug.

4. **The Bridge**: A solid Rogerian argument acknowledges the desires of each side and tries to accommodate both. In this part, point out the ways in which you agree or can find **common ground** between the two sides. There should be at least one point of agreement. This can be an acknowledgement of the one part of the opposition's agreement that you also support or an admittance to a shared set of values even if the two sides come to different ideas when employing those values. This phase of the essay is crucial for two reasons: finding common ground (1) shows the audience the two views are not necessarily at complete odds, that they share more than they seem, and (2) sets up the compromise to come, making it easier to digest for all parties. Thus, this section **builds a bridge** from the two initial isolated and opposite views to a compromise that both sides can reasonably support.

5. **The Compromise**: Now is the time to finally announce your compromise, which is your thesis. The compromise is what the essay has been building towards all along, so explain it carefully and demonstrate the logic of it. For example, if debating about whether to use racial profiling, a compromise might be based on both sides' desire for a safer society. That shared value can then lead to a new claim, one that disarms the original dispute or set of disputes. For the racial profiling example, perhaps a better solution would focus on more objective measures than race that would then promote safety in a less problematic way.

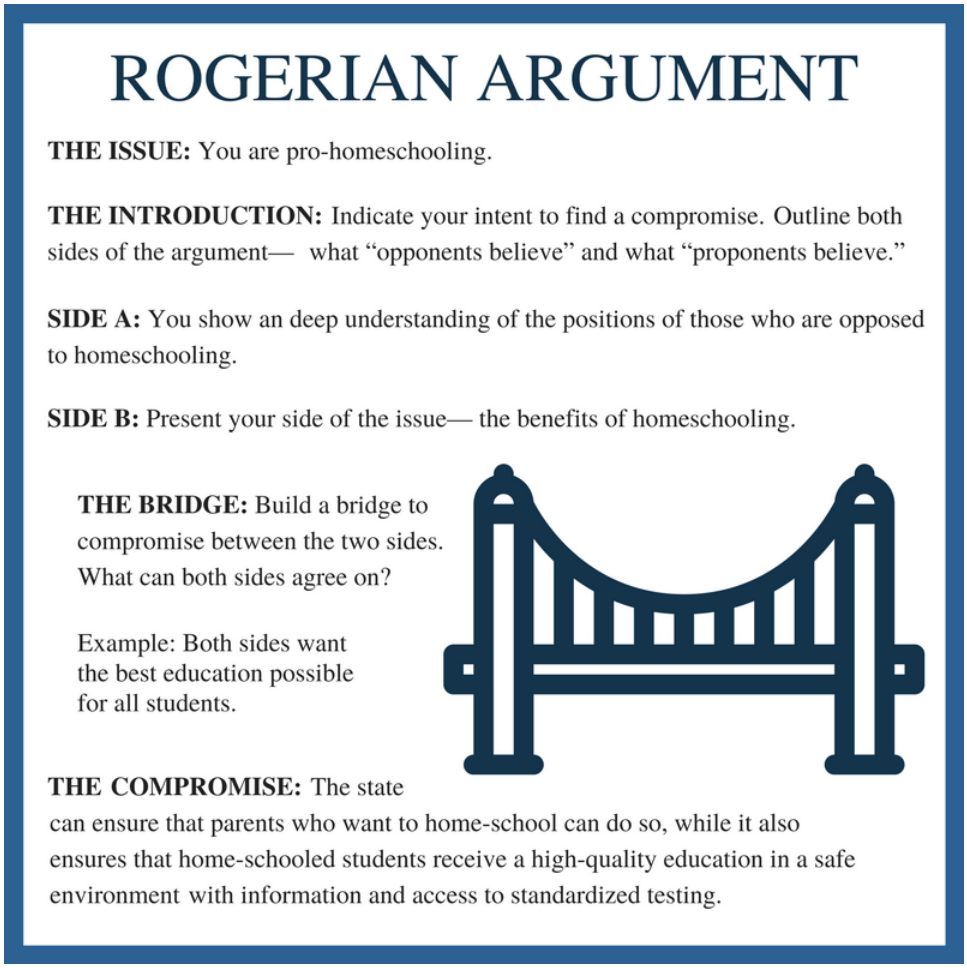


Figure 6.5.5 Rogerian Argument

Sample Writing Assignment 5

Find a controversial topic, and begin building a Rogerian argument. Write up your responses to the following:

1. The topic or dilemma I will write about is…
2. My opposing audience is…
3. My audience's view on the topic is…
4. My view on the topic is…
5. Our common ground–shared values or something that we both already agree on about the topic–is…
6. My compromise (the main claim or potential thesis) is…

The Toulmin Argument Model

Stephen Edelston Toulmin (born March 25, 1922) was a British philosopher, author, and educator. Toulmin devoted his works to analyzing moral reasoning. He sought to develop practical ways to evaluate ethical arguments effectively. The Toulmin Model of Argumentation, a diagram containing six interrelated components, was considered Toulmin's most influential work, particularly in the fields of rhetoric, communication, and computer science. His components continue to provide useful means for analyzing arguments, and the terms involved can be added to those defined in earlier sections of this chapter.

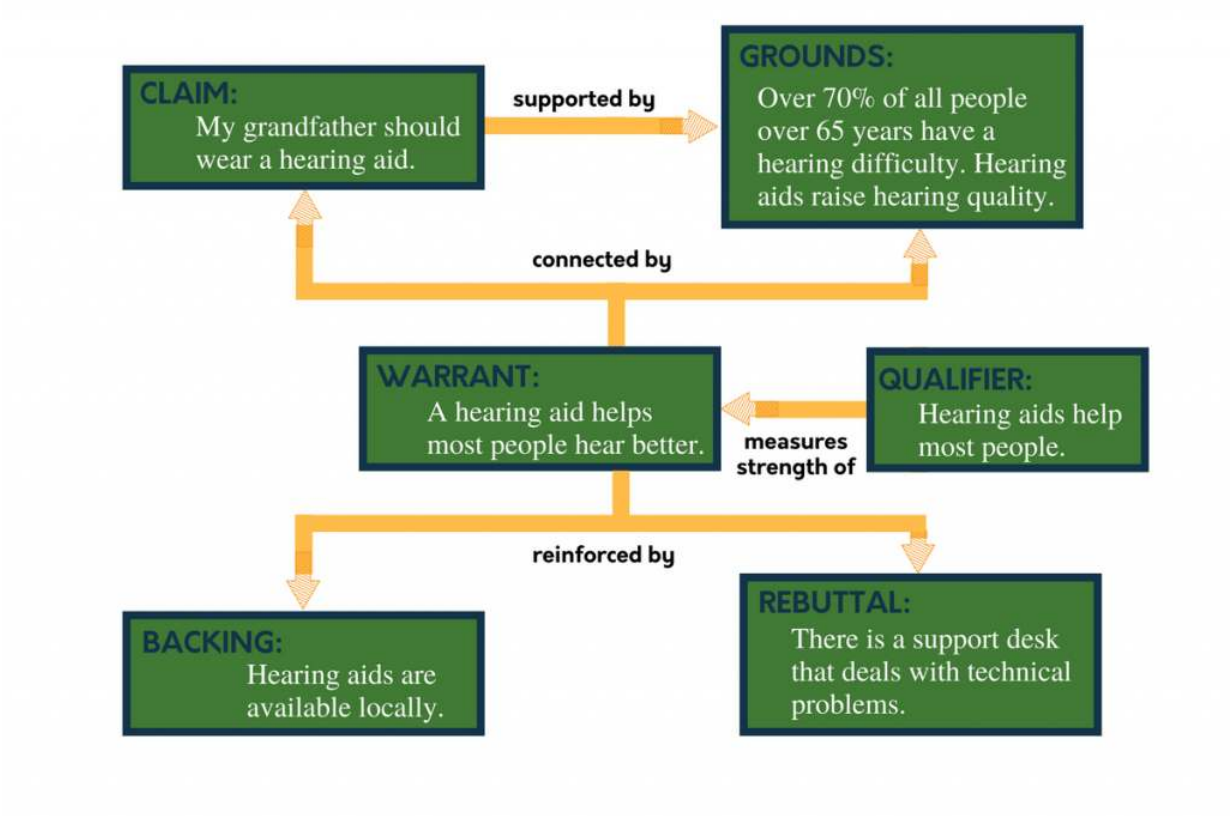


Figure 6.5.6 Toulmin Argument

The following are the parts of a Toulmin argument:

1. **Claim**: The claim is a statement that you are asking the other person to accept as true (i.e., a conclusion) and forms the nexus of the Toulmin argument because all the other parts relate back to the claim. The claim can include information and ideas you are asking readers to accept as true or actions you want them to accept and enact. One example of a claim:

My grandfather should wear a hearing aid.

This claim both asks the reader to believe an idea and suggests an action to enact. However, like all claims, it can be challenged. Thus, a Toulmin argument does not end with a claim but also includes grounds and warrant to give support and reasoning to the claim.

2. **Grounds**: The grounds form the basis of real persuasion and includes the reasoning behind the claim, data, and proof of expertise. Think of grounds as a combination of **premises** and **support**. The truth of the claim rests upon the grounds, so those grounds should be tested for strength, credibility, relevance, and reliability. The following are examples of grounds:

Over 70% of all people over 65 years have a hearing difficulty.

Hearing aids raise hearing quality.

Information is usually a powerful element of persuasion, although it does affect people differently. Those who are dogmatic, logical, or rational will more likely be persuaded by factual data. Those who argue emotionally and who are highly invested in their own position will challenge it or otherwise try to ignore it. Thus, grounds can also include appeals to emotion, provided they aren't misused. The best arguments, however, use a variety of support and rhetorical appeals.

3. **Warrant**: A warrant links data and other grounds to a claim, legitimizing the claim by showing the grounds to be **relevant**. The warrant may be carefully explained and explicit or unspoken and implicit. The warrant answers the question, "Why does that data mean your claim is true?" For example,

A hearing aid helps most people hear better.

The warrant may be simple, and it may also be a longer argument with additional sub-elements including those described below. Warrants may be based on ***logos*** , ***ethos*** or ***pathos*** , or values that are assumed to be shared with the listener. In many arguments, warrants are often implicit and, hence, unstated. This gives space for the other person to question and expose the warrant, perhaps to show it is weak or unfounded.

4. **Backing**: The backing for an argument gives additional support to the warrant. Backing can be confused with grounds, but the main difference is this: Grounds should directly support the premises of the main argument itself, while backing exists to help the warrants make more sense. For example,

Hearing aids are available locally.

This statement works as backing because it gives credence to the warrant stated above, that a hearing aid will help most people hear better. The fact that hearing aids are readily available makes the warrant even more reasonable.

5. **Qualifier**: The qualifier indicates how the data justifies the warrant and may limit how universally the claim applies. The necessity of qualifying words comes from the plain fact that most absolute claims are ultimately false (all women want to be mothers, e.g.) because one counterexample sinks them immediately. Thus, most arguments need some sort of qualifier, words that temper an absolute claim and make it more reasonable. Common qualifiers include "most," "usually," "always," or "sometimes." For example,

Hearing aids help most people.

The qualifier "most" here allows for the reasonable understanding that rarely does one thing (a hearing aid) universally benefit all people. Another variant is the reservation, which may give the possibility of the claim being incorrect:

Unless there is evidence to the contrary, hearing aids do no harm to ears.

Qualifiers and reservations can be used to bolster weak arguments, so it is important to recognize them. They are often used by advertisers who are constrained not to lie. Thus, they slip "usually," "virtually," "unless," and so on into their claims to protect against liability. While this may seem like sneaky practice, and it can be for some advertisers, it is important to note that the use of qualifiers and reservations can be a useful and legitimate part of an argument.

6. **Rebuttal**: Despite the careful construction of the argument, there may still be counterarguments that can be used. These may be rebutted either through a continued dialogue, or by pre-empting the counter-argument by giving the rebuttal during the initial presentation of the argument. For example, if you anticipated a counterargument that hearing aids, as a technology, may be fraught with technical difficulties, you would include a rebuttal to deal with that counterargument:

There is a support desk that deals with technical problems.

Any rebuttal is an argument in itself, and thus may include a claim, warrant, backing, and the other parts of the Toulmin structure.

Even if you do not wish to write an essay using strict Toulmin structure, using the Toulmin checklist can make an argument stronger. When first proposed, Toulmin based his layout on legal arguments, intending it to be used analyzing arguments typically found in the courtroom; in fact, Toulmin did not realize that this layout would be applicable to other fields until later. The first three

elements–“claim,” “grounds,” and “warrant”–are considered the essential components of practical arguments, while the last three —“qualifier,” “backing,” and “rebuttal”—may not be necessary for all arguments.

Sample Writing Assignment 6

Find an argument in essay form and diagram it using the Toulmin model. The argument can come from an Op-Ed article in a newspaper or a magazine think piece or a scholarly journal. See if you can find all six elements of the Toulmin argument. Use the structure above to diagram your article’s argument.

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6.6: Features of an Argument

Argument is not the loud, assertive, unwavering statement of your opinion in the hopes of conquering the opposition. Argument is the careful consideration of numerous positions and the careful development of logically sound, carefully constructed assertions that, when combined, offer a worthwhile perspective in an ongoing debate. Certainly you want to imagine yourself arguing *with* others—and certainly you want to believe your ideas have superior qualities to theirs—but the purpose of argument in the college setting is not to solve a practical problem or shut down a conversation. Rather, it's to illuminate, expand, and further inform a debate happening on a worthwhile subject between reasonable, intelligent people. In other words, calling the opposition *stupid* is not good argument, it's an ad hominem attack. For a review of this and other logical fallacies, refer to section 3.7 of this text.

Some of the key tools of argument are the strategies that students are asked to consider when doing a rhetorical analysis. Before beginning an argument of your own, review the basic concepts of rhetorical appeals below. As you plan and draft your own argument, carefully use the following elements of rhetoric to your own advantage.

Rhetorical Appeals

Logos

The use of data, statistical evidence, and sufficient support to establish the practicality and rationality of your claims should be the strongest element of your argument. To have a logically sound argument, you should include:

- A debatable and supportable claim
- Logical reasoning to support your claim
- Sound evidence and examples to justify the reasoning
- Reasonable projections
- Concessions & rebuttals
- Avoid logical fallacies

Ethos

The ethical and well-balanced use of all of the strategies above will help you to present yourself as trustworthy and intelligent in your consideration of the topic and in the development of your argument. This balance should include the use of credible, relevant sources which can be accomplished through research methods utilizing the strategies governing your discipline. Following those strategies will build your credibility as a writer of argument, particularly in the college setting, as you pay attention to the needs of the audience with regard to presentation and style. In college, this means that you have used the style manual (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) required for the assignment and appropriate to the audience. In so doing, make certain to cite the sources you have used according to the style manual you are using.

Pathos

The use of examples and language that evoke an appropriate emotional response in your reader—that gets them to care about your topic—can be helpful in argument. For academic essays, pathos may be useful in introductory sections, concluding sections, or as ways to link various parts of the paper together. However, if your argument is based solely or primarily upon emotional appeals, it will be viewed as weak in an academic setting, especially when data or ethical sources can disprove your claims. Therefore, college writing often puts more emphasis on logos and ethos.

Approaches to Argument

A well-structured argument is one that is carefully and optimally planned. It is organized so that the argument has a continuous building of ideas, one upon the other or in concert with the other, in order to produce the most persuasive impact or effect on the reader. For clarity, avoid repeating ideas, reasons, or evidence. Instead, consider how each idea in your argument connects to the others. Should some ideas come before others? Should you build your reasons from simple to complex or from complex to simple? Should you present the counterargument before your reasons? Or, would it make more sense for you to present your reasons and then the concessions and rebuttals? How can you use clear transitional phrases to facilitate reader comprehension of your argument? Consider these questions while constructing and revising your argument.

Simple to Complex/Complex to Simple

Whether structuring a paragraph or a research paper, the simple to complex (or reverse) method can be an effective way to build cohesion throughout your writing. Just as the phrase implies, simple to complex is when a writer introduces a simple concept then builds upon it to heighten interest. Sometimes, the opposite structure works to move the reader through your position. For example, if you choose to write on the topic of pollution as it impacts the world, you might begin with the concept of straws and sea turtles. Your simple topic of sea turtles swallowing straws thrown away might then move to the complex issues of consumption, consumerism and disposal. Conversely, if you begin with the broad, complex topic of consumerism, you could then move to the story of the sea turtles as a way of building pathos in the reader. Whichever method you choose, make sure that the relationship between the topics is logical and clear so that readers find validity in your position.

Cause/Effect

The cause/effect method is a way of establishing a reason, or reasons, why something has occurred. For example, if you live in south Texas, then you understand the problem that mosquitoes cause in the hot, humid summer months. While there is no way to eliminate all mosquitoes, there are ways to minimize their growth in your backyard. If you research the ways in which mosquitoes are born, you would understand the importance of things such as emptying containers of all stagnant water so that they cannot incubate or keeping your grass mowed to eliminate areas for them to populate. The process by which you go through to determine the cause of mosquito infestations is the cause and effect method. In argumentation, you might use this method to support a claim for community efforts to prevent mosquitoes from growing in your neighborhood. Demonstrating that process is effective for a logos based argument.

Chronological

Sometimes an argument is presented best when a sequential pattern is used. Oftentimes, that pattern will be based on the pattern of time in which the sequence occurs. For example, if you are writing an argumentative essay in which you are calling for a new stop light to be installed at a busy intersection, you might utilize a chronological structure to demonstrate the rate of increased accidents over a given period of time at that intersection. If your pattern demonstrates a marked increase in accidents, then your data would show a logical reason for supporting your position. Oftentimes, a chronological pattern involves steps indicated by signal words such as first, next, and finally. Utilizing this pattern will walk readers through your line of reasoning and guide them towards reaching your proposed conclusion.

Emphatic

Another method for organizing your writing is by order of importance. This method is often referred to as emphatic because organization is done based upon emphasis. The direction you choose to go is yours whether you begin with the strongest, most important point of your argument, or the weakest. In either case, the hierarchy of ideas should be clear to readers. The emphatic method is often subjectively based upon the writer's beliefs. If, for example, you want to build an argument for a new rail system to be used in your city, you will have to decide which reason is most important and which is simply support material. For one writer, the decrease in the number of cars on the road might be the most important aspect as it would result in a reduction of toxic emissions. For another writer, the time saved for commuters might be the most important aspect. The decision to start with your strongest or weakest point is one of style.

Style/ Eloquence

When we discuss style in academic writing, we generally mean the use of formal language appropriate for the given academic audience and occasion. Academics generally favor Standard American English and the use of precise language that avoids idioms, clichés, or dull, simple word choices. This is not to imply that these tropes are not useful; however, strong academic writing is typically objective and frequently avoids the use of first-person pronouns unless the disciplinary style and conventions suggest otherwise.

Some writing assignments allow you to choose your audience. In that case, the style in which you write may not be the formal, precise Standard American English that the academy prefers. For some writing assignments, you may even be asked to use, where appropriate, poetic or figurative language or language that evokes the senses. Additionally, instructors should be cognizant of second language learners and the variations in style when writing in a non-native language.

In all cases, it is important to understand what style of writing your audience expects, as delivering your argument in that style could make it more persuasive.

Practice Activity

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6.7: Failures in Evidence- When “Lots of Quotes” Can’t Save a Paper

In a strong essay, the author or writer’s own thesis and reasoning drive the argument, and then credible, valid evidence is used to support that reasoning. Arguments, in particular, are interactions between writer and audience. The author wants to persuade the audience to accept his or her claim, so he or she tries to provide sufficient compelling evidence that will sway the audience to his or her perspective.

Research questions might be easy to come up with. Claims or thesis statements can be easy to come up with. Even reasons or ideas to support the thesis or claim may be fairly easy to come up with. But for your ideas in a paper to be valid, for them to be accepted by a reader, they must be supported and developed with solid, credible, sufficient, accurate, relevant and compelling evidence.

Evidence is not simply “a bunch of quotes.” Nor is evidence a bunch of facts or statistics from an article, no matter how credible that article may be. For evidence to truly work in the sense of supporting a thesis/claim, it has to be accurate, sufficient to prove your point, directly related to the reason, ethically chosen, current, and credible. That is a lot to think about. It is certainly more than “a quote that looks good”.

Here are some things to think about avoiding when attempting to develop a strong source-based essay. Just as understanding what logical fallacies are so you can avoid them in your own writing, understanding what weak evidence is can help you to avoid falling into the trap of using it in your own work.

Failures in evidence occur when a reader says, “I do not accept your evidence”. Here is why that might happen:

- *The evidence that you have provided is* ***inaccurate.***
  You’ve misread information or misquoted; you are not interpreting the quoted material in an accurate manner
- *The evidence that you have provided is* ***insufficient.***
  You are using just a small piece of evidence to support your reasoning. You need more. You probably have a “generalization” fallacy.
- *The evidence that you have provided is* ***unrelated to the reason.***
  Your evidence does not clearly or directly relate to the point that you are trying to make.
- *The evidence that you have provided is* ***incomplete or too narrowly chosen.***
  You have “cherry picked” certain examples or pieces of information to the exclusion of others, so while you do have evidence to support your point, you are also neglecting a lot of other information
- *The evidence that you have provided is* ***old.***
  The information that you are citing is not relevant anymore. It is outdated!
- *The evidence that you have provided does not come from an* ***authoritative source.***
  The source of your evidence is not credible; the person being cited is not an authority on the topic

One of the bigger issues with evidence is not so much with the evidence itself, but with the way that you integrate it into the paper. A reader needs to understand clearly how and why the evidence you chose relates to the point that you are making. Evidence must always be explained. Whenever you integrate evidence into your papers, it is important to answer the question “How does this evidence support the point that I am making?” Never assume that the reader sees what you see in evidence. Always make it as clear as possible how the evidence supports the reason.

Practice Activity

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Zickel, Emilie. “Failures in Evidence: When Even ‘Lots of Quotes’ Can’t Save an [*sic*] Paper.” In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/failures-in-evidence-when-even-lots-of-quotes-cant-save-an-argument/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

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6.8: Basic Structure and Content of Argument

When you are tasked with crafting an argumentative essay, it is likely that you will be expected to craft your argument based upon a given number of sources–all of which should support your topic in some way. Your instructor might provide these sources for you, ask you to locate these sources, or provide you with some sources and ask you to find others. Whether or not you are asked to do additional research, an argumentative essay should contain the following basic components.

Claim: What Do You Want the Reader to Believe?

In an argument paper, the thesis is often called a claim. This claim is a statement in which you take a stand on a debatable issue. A strong, debatable claim has at least one valid counterargument, an opposite or alternative point of view that is as sensible as the position that you take in your claim. In your thesis statement, you should clearly and specifically state the position you will convince your audience to adopt. One way to accomplish this is via either a closed or open thesis statement.

A **closed** thesis statement includes sub-claims or reasons why you choose to support your claim.

Example of Closed Thesis Statement

The city of Houston has displayed a commitment to attracting new residents by making improvements to its walkability, city centers, and green spaces.

In this instance, walkability, city centers, and green spaces are the sub-claims, or reasons, why you would make the claim that Houston is attracting new residents.

An **open** thesis statement does not include sub-claims and might be more appropriate when your argument is less easy to prove with two or three easily-defined sub-claims.

Example of Open Thesis Statement

The city of Houston is a vibrant metropolis due to its walkability, city centers, and green spaces.

The choice between an open or a closed thesis statement often depends upon the complexity of your argument. Another possible construction would be to start with a research question and see where your sources take you.

A research question approach might ask a large question that will be narrowed down with further investigation.

Example of Research Question Approach

What has the city of Houston done to attract new residents and/or make the city more accessible?

As you research the question, you may find that your original premise is invalid or incomplete. The advantage to starting with a research question is that it allows for your writing to develop more organically according to the latest research. When in doubt about how to structure your thesis statement, seek the advice of your instructor or a writing center consultant.

A Note on Context: What Background Information About the Topic Does Your Audience Need?

Before you get into defending your claim, you will need to place your topic (and argument) into context by including relevant background material. Remember, your audience is relying on you for vital information such as definitions, historical placement, and controversial positions. This background material might appear in either your introductory paragraph(s) or your body paragraphs. How and where to incorporate background material depends a lot upon your topic, assignment, evidence, and audience. In most cases, kairos, or an opportune moment, factors heavily in the ways in which your argument may be received.

Evidence or Grounds: What Makes Your Reasoning Valid?

To validate the thinking that you put forward in your claim and sub-claims, you need to demonstrate that your reasoning is based on more than just your personal opinion. Evidence, sometimes referred to as grounds, can take the form of research studies or scholarship, expert opinions, personal examples, observations made by yourself or others, or specific instances that make your reasoning seem sound and believable. Evidence only works if it directly supports your reasoning — and sometimes you must

explain how the evidence supports your reasoning (do not assume that a reader can see the connection between evidence and reason that you see).

Warrants: Why Should a Reader Accept Your Claim?

A warrant is the rationale the writer provides to show that the evidence properly supports the claim with each element working towards a similar goal. Think of warrants as the glue that holds an argument together and ensures that all pieces work together coherently.

An important way to ensure you are properly supplying warrants within your argument is to use topic sentences for each paragraph and linking sentences within that connect the particular claim directly back to the thesis. Ensuring that there are linking sentences in each paragraph will help to create consistency within your essay. Remember, the thesis statement is the driving force of organization in your essay, so each paragraph needs to have a specific purpose (topic sentence) in proving or explaining your thesis. Linking sentences complete this task within the body of each paragraph and create cohesion. These linking sentences will often appear after your textual evidence in a paragraph.

Counterargument: But What About Other Perspectives?

Later in this section, we have included an essay by Steven Krause who offers a thorough explanation of what counterargument is (and how to respond to it). In summary, a strong arguer should not be afraid to consider perspectives that either challenge or completely oppose his or her own claim. When you respectfully and thoroughly discuss perspectives or research that counters your own claim or even weaknesses in your own argument, you are showing yourself to be an ethical arguer. The following are some things of which counter arguments may consist:

- summarizing opposing views;
- explaining how and where you actually agree with some opposing views;
- acknowledging weaknesses or holes in your own argument.

You have to be careful and clear that you are not conveying to a reader that you are rejecting your own claim. It is important to indicate that you are merely open to considering alternative viewpoints. Being open in this way shows that you are an ethical arguer – you are considering many viewpoints.

Types of Counterarguments

Counterarguments can take various forms and serve a range of purposes such as:

- *Could someone disagree with your claim?* If so, why? Explain this opposing perspective in your own argument, and then respond to it.
- *Could someone draw a different conclusion from any of the facts or examples you present?* If so, what is that different conclusion? Explain this different conclusion and then respond to it.
- *Could a reader question any of your assumptions or claims?* If so, which ones would they question? Explain and then respond.
- *Could a reader offer a different explanation of an issue?* If so, what might their explanation be? Describe this different explanation, and then respond to it.
- *Is there any evidence out there that could weaken your position?* If so, what is it? Cite and discuss this evidence and then respond to it.

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, that does not necessarily mean that you have a weak argument. It means ideally, and as long as your argument is logical and valid, that you have a counterargument. Good arguments can and do have counterarguments; it is important to discuss them. But you must also discuss and then respond to those counterarguments.

Response to Counterargument: I See That, But…

Just as it is important to include counterargument to show that you are fair-minded and balanced, you must respond to the counterargument so that a reader clearly sees that you are not agreeing with the counterargument and thus abandoning or somehow undermining your own claim. Failure to include the response to counterargument can confuse the reader. There are several ways to respond to a counterargument such as:

- Concede to a specific point or idea from the counterargument by explaining why that point or idea has validity. However, you must then be sure to return to your own claim, and explain why even that concession does not lead you to completely accept or support the counterargument;

- Reject the counterargument if you find it to be incorrect, fallacious, or otherwise invalid;
- Explain why the counterargument perspective does not invalidate your own claim.

A Note About Where to Put the Counterargument

It is certainly possible to begin the argument section (after the background section) with your counterargument + response instead of placing it at the end of your essay. Some people prefer to have their counterargument first where they can address it and then spend the rest of their essay building their own case and supporting their own claim. However, it is just as valid to have the counterargument + response appear at the end of the paper after you have discussed all of your reasons.

What is important to remember is that wherever you place your counterargument, you should:

- Address the counterargument(s) fully:
  - Explain what the counter perspectives are;
  - Describe them thoroughly;
  - Cite authors who have these counter perspectives;
  - Quote them and summarize their thinking.
- Then, respond to these counterarguments:
  - Make it clear to the reader of your argument why you concede to certain points of the counterargument or why you reject them;
  - Make it clear that you do not accept the counterargument, even though you understand it;
  - Be sure to use transitional phrases that make this clear to your reader.

Responding to Counterarguments

You do not need to attempt to do all of these things as a way to respond. Instead, choose the response strategy that makes the most sense to you for the counterargument that you find:

- If you agree with some of the counterargument perspectives, you can concede some of their points. ("I do agree that ….", "Some of the points made by X are valid…..") You could then challenge the importance/usefulness of those points;
  - "However, this information does not apply to our topic because…"
- If the counterargument perspective is one that contains different evidence than you have in your own argument, you can explain why a reader should not accept the evidence that the counterarguer presents;
- If the counterargument perspective is one that contains a different *interpretation* of evidence than you have in your own argument, you can explain why a reader should not accept the interpretation of the evidence that your opponent (counterarguer) presents.

If the counterargument is an acknowledgement of evidence that threatens to weaken your argument, you must explain why and how that evidence does not, in fact, invalidate your claim.

It is important to use **transitional phrases** in your paper to alert readers when you're about to present a counterargument. It's usually best to put this phrase at the beginning of a paragraph such as:

- Researchers have challenged these claims with…
- Critics argue that this view…
- Some readers may point to…
- A perspective that challenges the idea that…

Transitional phrases will again be useful to highlight your shift from counterargument to response:

- Indeed, some of those points are valid. However, . . .
- While I agree that . . . , it is more important to consider . . .
- These are all compelling points. Still, other information suggests that . .
- While I understand . . . , I cannot accept the evidence because . . .[1]

In the section that follows, the Toulmin method of argumentation is described and further clarifies the terms discussed in this section.

Practice Activity

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Jeffrey, Robin. “Counterargument and Response.” In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/questions-for-thinking-about-counterarguments/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

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6.9: Toulmin- Dissecting the Everyday Argument

Philosopher Stephen Toulmin studies the arguments we make in our everyday lives. He developed his method out of frustration with logicians (philosophers of argumentation) that studied argument in a vacuum or through mathematical formulations:

> All A are B. All B are C.
>
> Therefore, all A are C.[1]

Instead, Toulmin views argument as it appears in a conversation, in a letter, or some other context because real arguments are much more complex than the syllogisms that make up the bulk of Aristotle's logical program (for a review of syllogisms see section 3.4 of this text). Toulmin offers the contemporary writer/reader a way to map an argument. The result is a visualization of the argument process. This map comes complete with vocabulary for describing the parts of an argument. The vocabulary allows us to see the contours of the landscape—the winding rivers and gaping caverns. One way to think about a "good" argument is that it is a discussion that hangs together, a landscape that is cohesive (we can't have glaciers in our desert valley). Sometimes we miss the faults of an argument because it sounds good or appears to have clear connections between the statement and the evidence, when in truth the only thing holding the argument together is a lovely sentence or an artistic flourish.

For Toulmin, argumentation is an attempt to justify a statement or a set of statements. The better the demand is met, the higher the audience's appreciation. Toulmin's vocabulary for the study of argument offers labels for the parts of the argument to help us create our map.[2]

> **Claim:** The basic standpoint presented by a writer/ speaker.
>
> **Data:** The evidence which supports the claim.
>
> **Warrant:** The justification for connecting particular data to a particular claim. The warrant also makes clear the assumptions underlying the argument.
>
> **Backing:** Additional information required if the warrant is not clearly supported.
>
> **Rebuttal:** Conditions or standpoints that point out flaws in the claim or alternative positions.
>
> **Qualifiers:** Terminology that limits a standpoint. Examples include applying the following terms to any part of an argument: sometimes, seems, occasionally, none, always, never, etc.

The following paragraphs come from an article reprinted in *UTNE* magazine by Pamela Paxton and Jeremy Adam Smith titled: "Not Everyone Is Out to Get You."[3] Charting this excerpt helps us to understand some of the underlying assumptions found in the article.

Example: "Trust No One"

That was the slogan of The X-Files, the TV drama that followed two FBI agents on a quest to uncover a vast government conspiracy. A defining cultural phenomenon during its run from 1993–2002, the show captured a mood of growing distrust in America.

Since then, our trust in one another has declined even further. In fact, it seems that "Trust no one" could easily have been America's motto for the past 40 years—thanks to, among other things, Vietnam, Watergate, junk bonds, Monica Lewinsky, Enron, sex scandals in the Catholic Church, and the Iraq war.

The General Social Survey, a periodic assessment of Americans' moods and values, shows an 11-point decline from 1976–2008 in the number of Americans who believe other people can generally be trusted. Institutions haven't fared any better. Over the same period, trust has declined in the press (from 29 to 9 percent), education (38–29 percent), banks (41 percent to 20 percent), corporations (23–16 percent), and organized religion (33–20 percent). Gallup's 2008 governance survey showed that trust in the government was as low as it was during the Watergate era.

The news isn't all doom and gloom, however. A growing body of research hints that humans are hardwired to trust, which is why institutions, through reform and high performance, can still stoke feelings of loyalty, just as disasters and mismanagement can inhibit it. The catch is that while humans want, even need, to trust, they won't trust blindly and foolishly.

Figure 4.5.1[4] below demonstrates one way to chart the argument that Paxton and Smith make in "Trust No One." The remainder of the article offers additional claims and data, including the final claim that there is hope for overcoming our collective trust issues. The chart helps us to see that some of the warrants, in a longer research project, might require additional support. For example, the warrant that TV mirrors real life is an argument and not a fact that would require evidence.

Example of Visualizing an Argument

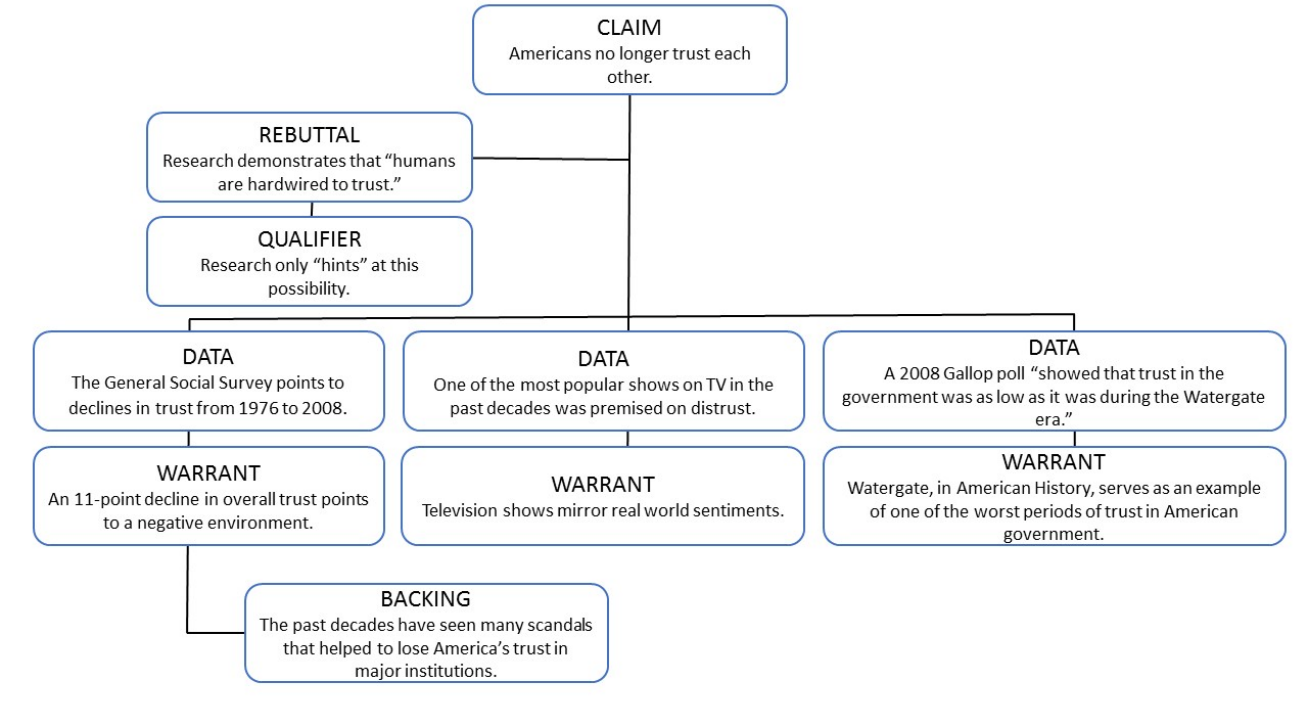


Figure 4.5.1: Visualizing an Argument

Charting your own arguments and the arguments of others helps you to visualize the meat of your discussion. All the flourishes are gone and the bones revealed. Even if you cannot fit an argument neatly into the boxes, the attempt forces you to ask important questions about your claim, your warrant, and possible rebuttals. By charting your argument you are forced to write your claim in a succinct manner and admit, for example, what you are using for evidence. Charted, you can see if your evidence is scanty, if it relies too much on one kind of evidence over another, and if it needs additional support. This charting might also reveal a disconnect between your claim and your warrant or cause you to reevaluate your claim altogether.

The Toulmin method is a useful way of determining the validity of an argument and is oftentimes the model used in legal proceedings. But the Toulmin method can leave you feeling as if you're stuck in an either/or situation as it focuses on justifying the arguer's reasons only. For a method that incorporates a humanistic approach, consider using the Rogerian method.

Practice Activity

The original version of this chapter contained H5P content. You may want to remove or replace this element.

This section contains material from:

Jones, Rebecca. "Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?" In *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 1*, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, 156-179. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2010. https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=243. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License.

1. Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and Francesca Snoeck Henkemans, *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation* (Mahwah: Erlbaum, NJ, 2002), 131. ↵
2. Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument, (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958). ↵

3. Pamela Paxton and Jeremy Adam Smith, “Reimagining a Politics of Trust: Not Everyone Is Out to Get You,” *UNTE Reader*, September-October 2009, https://www.utne.com/politics/reimagining-a-political-community-of-trust. ↵
4. This image was derived from “Figure 5: This Chart Demonstrates the Utility of Visualizing an Argument” by Rebecca Jones in: Rebecca Jones, “Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?,” in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 1*, eds. Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky (West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2010), 156-179, https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=243. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License. ↵

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6.10: Rogerian Argument

As discussed in the previous section, for Toulmin, argumentation is an attempt to justify a statement or a set of statements and focuses solely upon proving those statements. But what happens when you can concede that your opponent has a valid point? Because we are complex creatures, humans oftentimes find themselves strongly opposed to something that later changes for them once they are presented with different evidence. While many arguments can seemingly be based upon emotions alone, when presented with logical evidence to refute our position we may experience a crisis of conscience. Is it possible to hold firmly to one belief yet concede that the opposing side has merit? There is a way if you utilize the Rogerian method for argumentation.

Carl Rogers (1902-1987) was an American psychologist and clinical therapist who utilized a humanistic (client-centered) approach to psychology. When applied to argumentation, the Rogerian method makes use of examining counterarguments as enhancements, or concessions, rather than viewing them as completely oppositional. According to Lunsford et al., "Rogers argued that people involved in disputes should not respond to each other until they [can] fully, fairly, and even sympathetically state the other person's position."[1] Rogers' non confrontational methods, when applied to argumentation in rhetoric, suggests that the most personal feelings are also the most common and, therefore, are the most likely to be understood.

One benefit to utilizing a Rogerian approach in composition studies is that it encourages the writer/arguer to build a bridge towards oppositional positions. This does not mean that you abandon your own position, and it does not mean that your position is weak. Rather, a Rogerian approach provides alternative perspectives for considering a given position as well as methods for responding to counterarguments that might seem to refute your major premise.

Much like the Toulmin method, the Rogerian method relies upon claims that can be supported with evidence (data). How the Rogerian method differs is in the concession where, if there is a strong, valid argument that refutes your claim, you concede that argument might be a valid point in a different context. Or, perhaps you concede that a portion of your opponent's argument is valid for your position, yet point out how the circumstances differ, therefore making your position the most logical, strongest one for your given topic. While the goal remains to persuade your reader/audience to view your position as valid, when utilizing the Rogerian method you build common ground to other possibilities and demonstrate that counterviews are not entirely wrong.

When used in argumentation, the Rogerian method allows for a dialogue to occur surrounding an issue. By examining counterarguments to your claims, you are able to view your position/ thesis from a different point of view. Understanding all (or most) of the points surrounding your given topic will strengthen your own position as you will create a more fully informed essay.

Practice Activity

The original version of this chapter contained H5P content. You may want to remove or replace this element.

Pantuso, Terri, Sarah LeMire, and Kathy Anders, eds. *Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research*. 3rd ed. College Station: Texas A&M University, 2022. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

1. Andrea Lunsford, John J. Ruszkiewicz, and Keith Walters, *Everything's an Argument*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018), 139. ↵

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6.11: On the Other Hand- The Role of Antithetical Writing in First Year Composition Courses

Besides my own experiences as a student many years ago in courses similar to the ones you and your classmates are in now, I think the most important influence on how I have approached research and argumentative writing came from academic debate. Debate taught me at least two ways to approach an argument that were not part of my formal schooling. First, academic policy debate[1] taught me that argumentation is a contest—a sport, not at all different from tennis or basketball or figure skating or gymnastics, an activity where you have to work with a team, you have to practice, and the goal is to "win." And winning in academic debate happens: while it is a sport that is judged, it is an activity, like gymnastics or figure skating, where the rules for judging are surprisingly well codified. I will admit that seeing a debate or argument as something "to be won" has not always served me well in life, for there are any number of situations in which the framework for an argument is perhaps better perceived as an opportunity to listen and to compromise than to score points.

Second, because of the way that academic debate is structured, I learned quickly the importance of being able to perceive and argue multiple and opposing views on the same issue. Not unlike other sports where players play both offense and defense—baseball and basketball immediately come to mind—debaters have to argue both for and against the year's resolution, which was the broad proposition that framed all of the particular cases debate teams put forward for the entire season. In fact, it was not at all uncommon for a team to strenuously advocate for a controversial position one round—"the U.S. should engage in one-on-one talks with North Korea"—only to strenuously argue the opposite position—"the U.S. should not engage in one-on-one talks with North Korea"—the very next round. Seeing "multiple positions" was not simply a good idea; it was one of the rules of the game.

I've brought these past experiences into my current teaching in a number of ways, including one of the exercises I am discussing here, what my students and I call antithesis writing. These exercises will help you gain a better understanding of how to shape an argument, how to more fully explore a topic, and how to think more carefully about your different audiences.[2]

Thesis Is Not Doesn't Have to Be a Bad Thing (Or Why Write Antithesis Essays in the First Place)

Somewhere along the way, "thesis" became a dirty word in a lot of writing courses, inherently bound up and attached to all that is wrong with what composition historians and the writing scholars call the "Current-Traditional" paradigm of writing instruction. Essentially, this approach emphasizes the product and forms of writing (in most nineteenth century American rhetoric textbooks, these forms were Exposition, Description, Narration, and Argument), issues of syntax and grammar, correctness, and so forth. It didn't matter so much what position a writer took; what mattered most was that the writer got the form correct.

"Thesis" is often caught in/lumped into this current-traditional paradigm, I think mainly because of the rigid role and placement of a thesis in the classic form of the five-paragraph essay. Most of you and your classmates already know about this: in the five-paragraph formula, the thesis is the last sentence of the introduction, is divided into three parts, and it rigidly controls the structure of the following four paragraphs. Certainly this overly prescriptive and narrow definition of thesis is not useful. Jasper Neel describes this sort of formula in his book *Plato, Derrida, and Writing* as "anti-writing,"[3] and I think that Sharon Crowley is correct in arguing that the kind of teaching exemplified by the five-paragraph essay is more akin to filling out a form than it is to actual "writing."[4]

But when I discuss "thesis" here, I mean something much more broad and organic. I mean an initial direction that every research writing project must take. A thesis advocates a specific and debatable position, is not a statement of fact nor a summary of events, and it answers the questions "what's your point?" and "why should I care?" You should begin with a working thesis that attempts to answer these questions simply as a way of getting your research process started. True, these initial working theses are usually broad and unwieldy, but the emphasis here is on working, because as you research and think more carefully, you will inevitably change your thesis. And this is good—change is the by-product of learning, and seeing a working thesis differently is both the purpose and the opportunity of the antithesis exercise.

So, I think the first and probably most important reason to consider antithesis writing is to test and strengthen the validity of the working thesis. After all, there isn't much "debatable" about a working thesis like "crime is bad" or "cleaning up the environment is good," which suggests that there probably isn't a viable answer to the questions "what's your point?" and "why should I care?" Considering opposing and differing views can help you find the path to make a vague generalization like "crime is bad" into a more pointed, researchable, and interesting observation.

The second general value for antithesis exercises is to raise more awareness of your audience—the potential readers who would disagree with your working thesis, along with readers who are more favorable to your point. Sometimes, readers won't be convinced no matter what evidence or logic a writer presents; but it seems to me that writers have an obligation to at least try.

Generating Antithetical Points in Five Easy Steps

Step 1: Have a Working Thesis and Make Sure You Have Begun the Research Process.

Developing a good antithetical argument is not something you can do as a "first step" in the research process. Generally, you need to have already developed a basic point and need some evidence and research to develop that point. In other words, the process of developing an antithetical position has to come after you develop an initial position in the first place.

Step 2: Consider the Direct Opposite of Your Working Thesis.

This is an especially easy step if your working thesis is about a controversial topic.

Examples

Working thesis:

To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should not be allowed to carry concealed weapons.

Antithesis:

To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should be allowed to carry concealed weapons.

Examples

Working thesis:

Drug companies should be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television.

Antithesis:

Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television.

This sort of simple change of qualifiers also exposes weak theses, because, generally speaking, the opposite position of a proposition that everyone accepts as true is one that everyone easily accepts as false. For example, if you begin with a working thesis like "Drunk driving is bad" or "Teen violence is bad" to their logical opposites, you end up with an opposite that is ridiculous—"Drunk driving is good" or "Teen violence is good." What that signals is that it is probably time to revisit your original working thesis.

Usually though, considering the opposite of a working thesis is a little more complicated. For example:

Examples

Working Thesis:

Many computer hackers commit serious crimes and represent a major expense for internet-based businesses.

Antitheses:

Computer hackers do not commit serious crimes.

Computer hacking is not a major expense for internet-based businesses.

Both of the antithetical examples are the opposite of the original working theses, but each focuses on different aspects of the working thesis.

Step 3: Ask "Why" about Possible Antithetical Arguments.

Creating antitheses by simply changing the working thesis to its opposite typically demands more explanation. The best place to develop more details with your antithesis is to ask "why." For example:

Examples

Why should drug companies not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs? Because . . .

- The high cost of television advertising needlessly drives up the costs of prescriptions.
- Advertisements too often confuse patients and offer advice that contradicts the advice of doctors.

Examples

Why are the crimes committed by computer hackers not serious? Because . . .

- They are usually pranks or acts of mischief.
- Computer hackers often expose problems for Internet businesses before serious crimes result.

The point here is to dig a little further into your antithetical argument. Asking "why" is a good place to begin that process.

Step 4: Examine Alternatives to Your Working Thesis.

Often, the best antithetical arguments aren't about "the opposite" so much as they are about alternatives. For example, the working thesis "To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should not be allowed to carry concealed weapons" presumes that a serious potential cause for violence on campuses is the presence of guns. However, someone could logically argue that the more important cause of violence on college campuses is alcohol and drug abuse. Certainly the number of incidents involving underage drinking and substance abuse outnumber those involving firearms on college campuses, and it is also probably true that many incidents of violence on college campuses involve drinking or drugs.

Now, unlike the direct opposite of your working thesis, the alternatives do not necessarily negate your working thesis. There is no reason why a reader couldn't believe that both concealed weapons and alcohol and substance abuse contribute to violence on campuses. But in considering alternatives to your working thesis, the goal is to "weigh" the positions against each other. I'll return to this matter of "weighing your position" later.

Step 5: Imagine Hostile Audiences.

Whenever you are trying to develop a clearer understanding of the antithesis of your working thesis, you need to think about the kinds of audiences who would disagree with you. By thinking about the opposites and alternatives to your working thesis, you are already starting to do this because the opposites and the alternatives are what a hostile audience might think.

Sometimes, potential readers are hostile to a particular working thesis because of ideals, values, or affiliations they hold that are at odds with the point being advocated by the working thesis. For example, people who identify themselves as being "pro-choice" on the issue of abortion would certainly be hostile to an argument for laws that restrict access to abortion; people who identify themselves as being "prolife" on the issue of abortion would certainly be hostile to an argument for laws that provide access to abortion.

At other times, audiences are hostile to the arguments of a working thesis because of more crass and transparent reasons. For example, the pharmaceutical industry disagrees with the premise of the working thesis "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" because they stand to lose billions of dollars in lost sales. Advertising companies and television broadcasters would also be against this working thesis because they too would lose money. You can probably easily imagine some potential hostile audience members who have similarly selfish reasons to oppose your point of view.

Of course, some audiences will oppose your working thesis based on a different interpretation of the evidence and research. This sort of difference of opinion is probably most common with research projects that are focused on more abstract and less definitive subjects. But there are also different opinions about evidence for topics that you might think would have potentially more concrete "right" and "wrong" interpretations. Different researchers and scholars can look at the same evidence about a subject like gun control and arrive at very different conclusions.

Regardless of the reasons why your audience might be hostile to the argument you are making with your working thesis, it is helpful to try to imagine your audience as clearly as you can. What sort of people are they? What other interests or biases might they have? Are there other political or social factors that you think are influencing their point of view? If you want to persuade at least some members of this hostile audience that your point of view and your interpretation of the research is correct, you need to know as much about your hostile audience as you possibly can.

Strategies for Answering Antithetical/Oppositional Arguments

It might not seem logical, but directly acknowledging and addressing positions that are different from the one you are holding in your research can actually make your position stronger. When you take on the antithesis in your research project, it shows you have thought carefully about the issue at hand and you acknowledge that there is no clear and easy "right" answer. There are many different ways you might incorporate the antithesis into your research to make your own thesis stronger and to address the concerns of those readers who might oppose your point of view. For now, focus on three basic strategies: directly refuting your opposition, weighing your position against the opposition, and making concessions.

Directly Refuting Your Opposition

Perhaps the most obvious approach, one way to address those potential readers who might raise objections to your arguments, is to simply refute their objections with better evidence and reasoning. Of course, this is an example of yet another reason why it is so important to have good research that supports your position: when the body of evidence and research is on your side, it is usually a lot easier to make a strong point.

Answering antithetical arguments with research that supports your point of view is also an example of where you as a researcher might need to provide a more detailed evaluation of your evidence. The sort of questions you should answer about your own research—who wrote it, where was it published, when was it published, etc.—are important to raise in countering antithetical arguments that you think come from suspicious sources.

Weighing Your Position Against the Opposition

Readers who oppose the argument you are trying to support with your research might do so because they value or "weigh" the implications of your working thesis differently than you do. For example, those opposed to a working thesis like "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" might think this because they think the advantages of advertising drugs on television—increased sales for pharmaceutical companies, revenue for advertising agencies and television stations, and so forth—are more significant than the disadvantages of advertising drugs on television.

Besides recognizing and acknowledging the different ways of comparing the advantages and disadvantages suggested by your working thesis, the best way of answering these antithetical arguments in your own writing is to clearly explain how you weigh and compare the evidence. This can be a challenging writing experience because it requires a subtle hand and a broad understanding of multiple sides of your topic. But if in acknowledging to your readers that you have carefully considered the reasons against your working thesis and you can demonstrate your position to be more persuasive, then this process of weighing positions can be very effective.

Making Concessions

In the course of researching and thinking about the antithesis to your working thesis and its potentially hostile audiences, it may become clear to you that these opposing views have a point. When this is the case, you may want to consider revising your working thesis or your approach to your research to make some concessions to these antithetical arguments.

Sometimes, my students working on this exercise "make concessions" to the point of changing sides on their working thesis—that is, in the process of researching, writing, and thinking about their topic, a researcher moves from arguing for their working thesis to arguing for their antithesis. This might seem surprising, but it makes perfect sense when you remember the purpose of research in the first place. When we study the evidence on a particular issue, we often realize that our initial and uninformed impression or feelings on an issue were simply wrong. That's why we research: we put more trust in ideas based on research than in things based on gut instinct or feelings.

But usually, most concessions to antithetical perspectives are less dramatic and can be accomplished in a variety of ways. You might want to employ some qualifying terms to hedge a bit. For example, the working thesis "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" might be qualified to "Drug companies should be closely regulated about what they are allowed to advertise in TV." I think this is still a strong working thesis, but the revised working thesis acknowledges the objections some might have to the original working thesis.

Of course, you should use these sorts of concessions carefully. An over-qualified working thesis can be just as bad as a working thesis about something that everyone accepts as true: it can become so watered-down as to not have any real significance anymore. A working thesis like "Drug company television advertising is sometimes bad and sometimes good for patients" is over-qualified to the point of taking no real position at all.

But You Still Can't Convince Everyone . . .

I'd like to close by turning away a bit from where I started this essay, the influence of competitive debate on my early education about argument. In debate, an argument is part of the game, the catalyst for the beginning of a competition. The same is often true within college classrooms. Academic arguments are defined in terms of their hypothetical nature; they aren't actually real but rather merely an intellectual exercise.

But people in the real world do hold more than hypothetical positions, and you can't always convince everyone that you're right, no matter what evidence or logic you might have on your side. You probably already know this. We have all been in conversations with friends or family members where, as certain as we were that we were right about something and as hard as we tried to prove we were right, our friends or family were simply unwilling to budge from their positions. When we find ourselves in these sorts of deadlocks, we often try to smooth over the dispute with phrases like "You're entitled to your opinion" or "We will have to agree to disagree," and then we change the subject. In polite conversation, this is a good strategy to avoid a fight. But in academic contexts, these deadlocks can be frustrating and difficult to negotiate.

A couple of thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher and rhetorician Aristotle said that all of us respond to arguments based on three basic characteristics or appeals: logos or logic, pathos or emotional character, and ethos, the writer's or speaker's perceived character. Academic writing tends to rely most heavily on logos and ethos because academics tend to highly value arguments based on logical research and arguments that come from writers with strong character-building qualifications—things like education, experience, previous publications, and the like. But it's important to remember that pathos is always there, and particularly strong emotions or feelings on a subject can obscure the best research.

Most academic readers have respect for writers when they successfully argue for positions that they might not necessarily agree with. Along these lines, most college writing instructors can certainly respect and give a positive evaluation to a piece of writing they don't completely agree with as long as it uses sound logic and evidence to support its points. However, all readers—students, instructors, and everyone else—come to your research project with various preconceptions about the point you are trying to make. Some of them will already agree with you and won't need much convincing. Some of them will never completely agree with you, but will be open to your argument to a point. And some of your readers, because of the nature of the point you are trying to make and their own feelings and thoughts on the matter, will never agree with you, no matter what research evidence you present or what arguments you make. So, while you need to consider the antithetical arguments to your thesis in your research project to convince as many members of your audience as possible that the point you are trying to make is correct, you should remember that you will likely not convince all of your readers all of the time.

Practice Activity

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This section contains material from:

Krause, Steven D. "On the Other Hand: The Role of Antithetical Writing the First Year Composition Courses." In *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 2*, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, 141-153. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2011. https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=160. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 United States License.

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1. Explaining "academic policy debate" is not my goal in this essay. But I will say that academic debate bears almost no resemblance to "debates" between political candidates or to the stereotypical way debate tends to be depicted on television shows or in movies. Certainly debate involves a certain intellectual prowess; but I think it's fair to say that debate is a lot closer to a competitive sport than a classroom exercise. Two excellent introductions to the world of academic debate are the Wikipedia entry for "Policy Debate" (https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy_debate) ↵
2. The original text contained this statement: "In this essay, I borrow heavily from my own online textbook, The Process of Research Writing, which is available for free at http://stevendkrause.com/tprw/. You might want to visit that site for additional information about this exercise and other exercises I've put together for teaching the research writing process." ↵

3. Jasper Neel, *Plato, Derrida, and Writing* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1988). ↵
4. Sharon Crowley, *The Methodical Memory: Invention in Current-Traditional Rhetoric*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1990). ↵

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SECTION OVERVIEW

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6.12.2: Tone, Language, and Appeal

6.12.3: Introduction to Rebuttal and Refutation of Counterargument

6.12.4: Formula for Refutation and Rebuttal

6.12.5: Further Your Understanding- Refutation and Rebuttal

6.12.6: Putting It Together- Academic Argument

6.12.7: Why It Matters- Academic Argument

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6.12.9: Argumentative Thesis Statements

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6.12.14: Introduction to Building Common Ground

6.12.15: Audience Analysis

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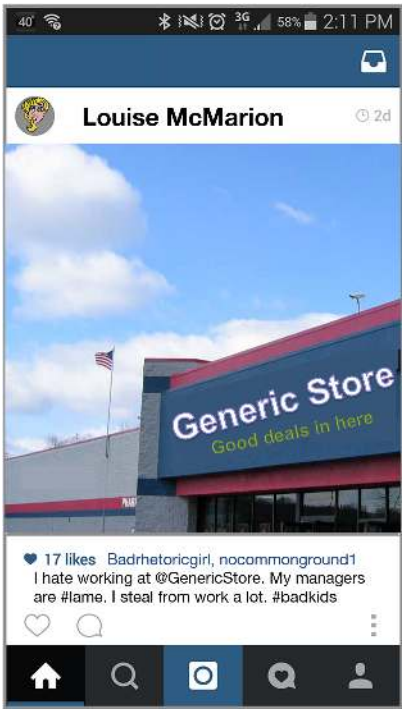
6.12.1: Audience Awareness

Learning Objectives

- Recognize rhetorical approaches to building common ground
- Evaluate rhetorical approaches to building common ground

Now you know a little bit about the people to whom President Obama was speaking and others whom he did not address or consider directly but who may have heard or read his speech nonetheless. The president had an immediate purpose to eulogize Reverend Pinckney for an audience of mourners, but he was also speaking to a more general audience of U.S. citizens concerned about racism, gun violence, civil rights, and inequality. The claims and evidence from his speech may therefore be relevant to other audiences who are concerned about similar issues and share some of the same ideas and values.

Even if you aren't planning to become a politician, you have to think about audience for everything you say and do. This is even more important with social media. Some of the best examples of not thinking about unintended audiences or failing to build common ground come from social media. Think about the following fake social media post in terms of audience and common ground:



What's wrong here? Louise works at Generic Store and makes a social media post speaking poorly of her employer and admitting to criminal behavior. To add to that, she tags the store's social media account in the post. Obviously, Louise is not considering unintended audiences. She may have meant to share her post only with "Badrhetoricgirl" and "nocommonground1," but at least sixteen others have seen and responded to her post. It's very likely that her employer would come across this post and take disciplinary action against Louise.

This example may seem ridiculous: maybe you are already wise to social media privacy settings, but this same kind of mistake takes place frequently in student writing and speaking.

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6.12.2: Tone, Language, and Appeal

Learning Objectives

- Recognize rhetorical approaches to building common ground
- Evaluate rhetorical approaches to building common ground

You can approach your audience's needs and build common ground using three basic rhetorical approaches: **tone**, **language**, and **appeal**.

Tone

What's the difference between a formal tone and a conversational tone? What about the difference between writing that's conversational and writing that's very rigid? Of the three approaches we cover here, tone may be the most important one: if you choose the wrong tone, you may turn off your audience completely.

Take a look at this example from a student's proposal to create an infographic for senior citizens:

real student's writing

Based on this senior citizen audience, simplicity and authenticity must be key characteristics of the infographic. Its message, presented mainly through visuals, must not only be clear and easy to understand, but it must also be genuine in nature. Caution must be taken to avoid seeming judgmental towards the audience members' digital skills and tendencies.

This student wants to make sure the tone of her document builds good will with her audience. If your audience is made up of senior citizens, you would want to make sure that you aren't patronizing or belittling them about their technical expertise.

Can you think of a situation where your tone didn't match the audience's expectations? As you write an essay, you have to consider the audience's potential reception of your tone. Even if the audience is hypothetical, the only way to ensure that you aren't "tone deaf" is to pay attention to your tone.

Language

Language is closely related to tone. In fact, if you misjudge the appropriate language for your audience, your tone will suffer, too. If you are writing an article for a scientific journal, obviously you would want to make sure to use the technical language appropriate to your subject.

Language has a lot to do with **discourse communities**. Imagine that you work in a car assembly plant. You know your job and enough about the process of car assembly in general to talk to anybody else in the plant about their jobs, as well. You probably have a specialized vocabulary that describes your work process. Now, imagine that you walk into an airplane manufacturing plant. Would you be able to do the same thing? Sure, many of the processes are the same, and you might be able to talk to the workers about the things you have in common. But the vocabulary is different. Workers in the airplane factory talk about different things and have different common knowledge than you do. Each factory is a **discourse community**. When you write, you are participating in a discourse community, and you should use language that matches the expectations of the audience.

Can you think of a situation where your language didn't match the audience's expectations? If you are an audiologist, for example, you would use different language to explain how a cochlear implant works to the parents of a deaf child than you would to discuss advances in cochlear implant technology with other audiologists.

Appeals

You have already learned about the rhetorical appeals: **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos**. Match them to their definition in the practice box below:

review your knowledge

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What do these appeals have to do with finding common ground with an audience? Well, the way you balance ethos, pathos, and logos can vary depending on who your audience is. Think about the scenario below:

You are a scientist who studies climate and polar bear mating habits. You have just completed and published a study that tracks the declining polar bear population with the reduction of ice caps in the Arctic Ocean. You believe the results of this study are

important, and you need to explain them to three different audiences.

An audience of **scientists** is primarily interested in your credibility (ethos) and your facts (logos). They want to know more about your methods, how your data was collected, and the accuracy of your study. When you are presenting to this group, you should minimize appeals to emotion, as they could turn off your audience.

An audience of **kindergarteners** is primarily interested in big, fluffy polar bears. Thus, you would want to emphasize the appeal to emotion (pathos). Your ethos, or credibility, is important, but in a different way than it is with the scientists. You must express yourself in a way that makes the children feel comfortable with you and makes them trust what you say. Facts are important in every situation, but the kindergarteners aren't going to scrutinize your methods.

An audience of **climate change denialist politicians** would generally be very hostile to what you have to say. Playing up your credibility (ethos) may not be very helpful because they already reject the field in which your credibility is rooted. You have to rely heavily on facts (logos) with this audience and demonstrate that your facts are impossible to deny. You also have to rely on emotion (pathos) but in a different way than you do with the kindergarteners. This hostile audience is already reacting to you with emotion, so it's important for you to receive that emotional energy and make the best of it.

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6.12.3: Introduction to Rebuttal and Refutation of Counterargument

What you'll learn to do: evaluate strategies for rebuttal and refutation of counterargument

An integral part of composing a strong argument is including counterargument. This can be difficult, especially if a writer is arguing for a position s/he already agrees with. In such cases, writers can sometimes make good points to support their stances; however, their arguments are vulnerable unless they anticipate and address counterarguments. When a writer does this, it is often referred to as rebuttal or refutation. Some scholars of rhetoric differentiate the two words in terms of if you can actually disprove a claim or just argue against it; however, in this section, we will use the terms as basically interchangeable to help get you more used to their function in argument. When writers are able to skillfully rebut or refute a view that runs counter to their claims, it strengthens their work. Rebuttal and refutation are common in all types of argument, including academic argument. As you complete more advanced work in college, you will be expected to address counterargument often. And while you might not always need to or be able to prove that other points of view are wrong, you may at least need to try to argue against them.

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6.12.4: Formula for Refutation and Rebuttal

Learning Objective

- Recognize strategies for rebuttal and refutation of counterargument

Though writers may handle rebuttal and refutation in different ways, there is a formula for success in academic argument. Here are the key parts of that formula:

Accurately represent opposing viewpoints

If you don't accurately and thoroughly represent opposing viewpoints in your own writing, some of your potential audience will automatically be turned off. Good rebuttal and refutation begins with a solid understanding of all possible points of view on your topic. That may mean you even need to acknowledge and accommodate opposing points of view. Acknowledging other views shows you are aware of ideas that run counter to your claims. You will almost always be expected to at least acknowledge such views in your work. You may also, though, need to accommodate opposing views, especially if many people see them as reasonable. If, for example, you were writing a piece arguing that students should take a gap year between high school and college, it would benefit your work to acknowledge that a gap year isn't realistic for or even desired by all students. You may further accommodate this other view by explaining how some students may thrive in the structure that school provides and would gain by going directly from high school to college. Remember that even if you cannot prove positions that counter your own are wrong, you can still use rebuttal and refutation to show why they might be problematic, flawed, or just not as good as another possible position for some people.

Use a respectful, non-incendiary tone

It doesn't help the writer's cause to offend, upset, or alienate potential readers, even those who hold differing views. Treating all potential readers with respect and avoiding words or phrases that belittle people and/or their views will help you get your points across more effectively. For example, if you are writing a paper on why America would benefit from a third viable major political party, it will not help your cause to write that "Republicans are dumb, and Democrats are whiny." First, those claims are too general. But even if they weren't, they won't help your cause. If you choose to break down the perceived problems with members of political parties, you must do so in a way that is as respectful as possible. Calling someone a name or insulting them (directly or indirectly) is very rarely a successful strategy in argument.

Use reliable information in your rebuttal/refutation

Always be sure to carefully check the ideas or claims you make in rebutting a counterargument. The brain is not an infallible computer, and there are instances when we think we know information is accurate but it isn't. Sometimes we know a lot about a particular subject but we get information confused or time has changed things a bit. Additionally, we may be tempted to use a source that backs up our ideas perfectly, but it might not be the most reputable, credible, or up-to-date place for information. Don't assume you just have all of the information to shoot down counterarguments. Use your knowledge, but also do thorough research, double- and triple-check information, and look for sources that are likely to carry weight with readers. For example, it is widely assumed that bulls are attracted to the color red; however, in reality, bulls are colorblind, so what many people assume as fact is incorrect. Be thorough so you have confidence in your claims when you are rebutting/refuting and likewise when you are attempting to prevent yourself from being open to rebuttal/refutation.

Use qualifying words when applicable to help you be more accurate and to avoid locking you into an absolute claim

Qualifying words are terms such as "many," "most," "some," "might," "rarely," "doubtful," "often," etc. You get the point. These are words that don't lock you into a claim that could be easily refuted and that can help you more easily rebut counterarguments. For example, if someone says "Nobody dies of tuberculosis anymore" we might get the point that it isn't as common as it used to be. Still, it isn't an accurate statement, and a more precise way to phrase such a claim would be to qualify it: "Not many people die each year in America from tuberculosis." You might not always need to use qualifying terms. If you are making a point that is absolute, feel free to make it strongly; however, if there is a need to give your claim more flexibility, use qualifying words to help you.

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6.12.5: Further Your Understanding- Refutation and Rebuttal

Learning Objectives

- Recognize strategies for rebuttal and refutation of counterargument
- Evaluate strategies for rebuttal and refutation of counterargument

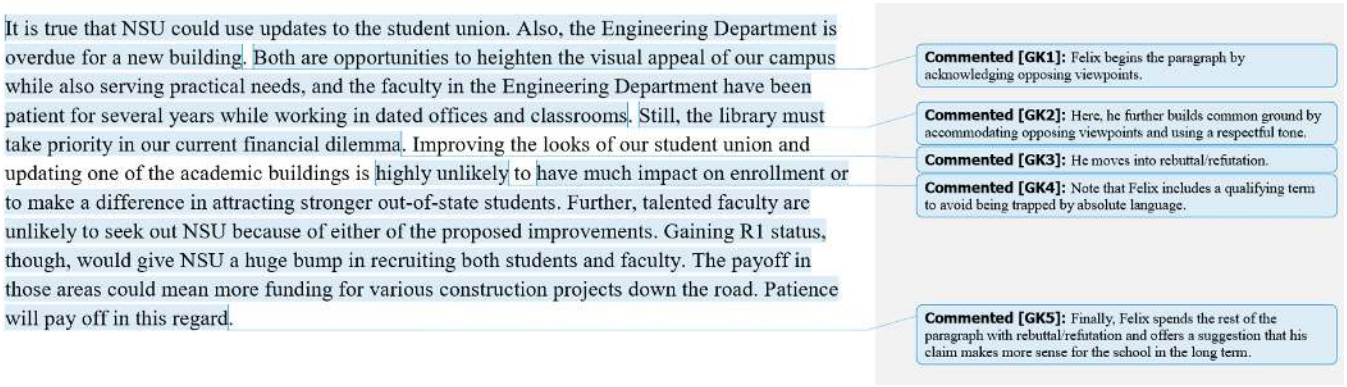
Now let's take a look at examples of rebuttal and refutation to further your understanding:

Felix is writing his argument paper on why his university should not have cut funding to the school's library. His arguable thesis reads as follows: Because Northern State University has a mission statement that includes becoming a Research 1 (R1) institution, full funding should be restored to the library to ensure faculty and students have adequate resources to enhance their research agendas.

Felix has done his research, and he knows that a couple of the main counterarguments are that the school needs funds to renovate the student union and to construct a new building for the Engineering Department. Thus, he can anticipate counterarguments and include them in his paper. While Felix cannot prove beyond doubt that the school should use more funding for the library instead of to address other needs, he can try to make the case.

Read over Felix's passage below to see how he strengthens his case, and note the annotations to help you see parts of the formula in action:

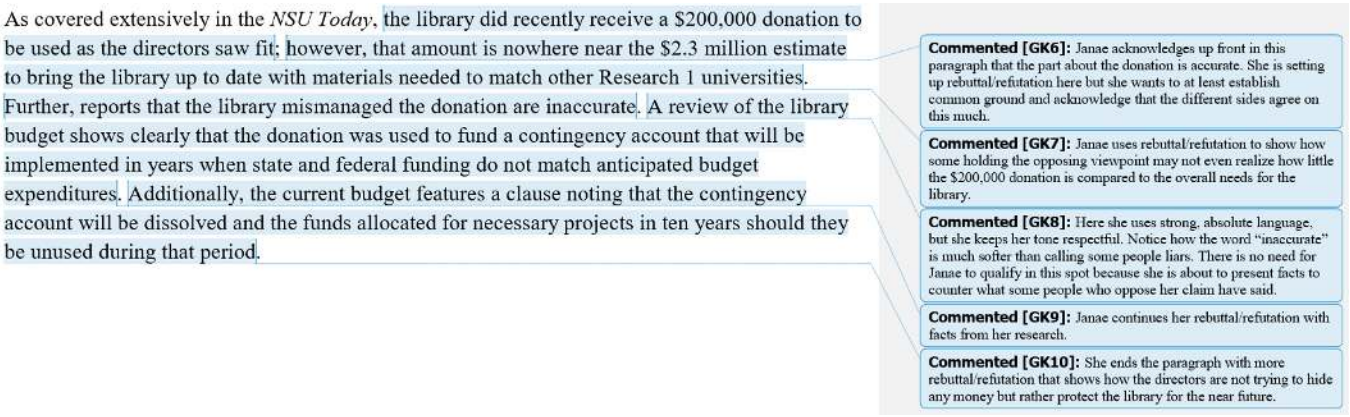
Download the PDF of these examples



Now let's take a look at another example:

Janae is also writing her argument paper on why NSU should not have cut funding to the library. During her research, though, she found evidence that some people on campus feel that the library has been careless with previous funding by mismanaging a $200,000 direct donation. Janae looked closer into the library budget, however, and found that the $200,000 donation was used to establish an emergency account for future years when funding did not meet their anticipated needs. Janae included as a source an editorial from the school newspaper written by a non-library faculty member who argued that since the library squandered $200,000, it should lose funding in favor of the student union and new Engineering building.

See Janae's example in the passage below, and again, read over the annotations to see how she uses parts of the formula:



Notice how each student has a different goal and approach, yet they both still use parts of the formula to help them accomplish their rhetorical aims.

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6.12.6: Putting It Together- Academic Argument

Now that you have learned the keys to a successful argument, apply them in your own writing. As you compose an argument, remember to do the following:

- Construct a thesis that is focused, debatable, assertive, reasonable, and able to be supported with evidence;
- Avoid logical fallacies, such as post hoc, straw man, false dichotomy, bandwagon, ad hominem, hasty generalization, slippery slope, and begging the question;
- Build common ground with readers, paying attention to tone, language, and rhetorical appeals;
- Incorporate rebuttal and refutation, fairly acknowledging counterargument while still arguing the strengths of your claim.

Remember that academic argument, as well as effective persuasion in the professional and personal arenas, is guided by careful research and reasoned discourse.

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6.12.7: Why It Matters- Academic Argument



You may question why you need to study argument. After all, the internet often seems as though it is one big shouting match—arguing is everywhere! But academic argument is different from much of the argument, or arguing, that happens in life. Academic arguments value certain approaches and follow established strategies. In this module, you will be introduced to methods for composing an effective academic argument, including constructing an arguable thesis, building common ground, avoiding logical fallacies, and refuting counterargument. These strategies will not only benefit you in your academic career but will also help you be more persuasive in your professional and personal lives.

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6.12.8: Introduction to Argumentative Thesis Statements

What you'll learn to do: evaluate argumentative thesis statements

An academic argument asserts a claim and supports that claim with evidence. The goal of an argument is to convince readers that the writer's position is reasonable, valid, and worthy of consideration. Therefore, an argumentative thesis statement needs to be not only clear and focused, but also debatable, assertive, and reasoned. Additionally, an argumentative thesis must be able to be supported with evidence.

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6.12.9: Argumentative Thesis Statements

Learning Objective

- Recognize an arguable thesis

Below are some of the key features of an argumentative thesis statement.

An argumentative thesis is . . .

Debatable

An argumentative thesis must make a claim about which reasonable people can disagree. Statements of fact or areas of general agreement cannot be argumentative theses because few people disagree about them.

Example

Junk food is bad for your health is not a debatable thesis. Most people would agree that junk food is bad for your health.

Because junk food is bad for your health, the size of sodas offered at fast-food restaurants should be regulated by the federal government is a debatable thesis. Reasonable people could agree or disagree with the statement.

Assertive

An argumentative thesis takes a position, asserting the writer's stance. Questions, vague statements, or quotations from others are not argumentative theses because they do not assert the writer's viewpoint.

Example

Federal immigration law is a tough issue about which many people disagree is not an arguable thesis because it does not assert a position.

Federal immigration enforcement law needs to be overhauled because it puts undue constraints on state and local police is an argumentative thesis because it asserts a position that immigration enforcement law needs to be changed.

Reasonable

An argumentative thesis must make a claim that is logical and possible. Claims that are outrageous or impossible are not argumentative theses.

Example

City council members stink and should be thrown in jail is not an argumentative thesis. City council members' ineffectiveness is not a reason to send them to jail.

City council members should be term limited to prevent one group or party from maintaining control indefinitely is an arguable thesis because term limits are possible, and shared political control is a reasonable goal.

Evidence Based

An argumentative thesis must be able to be supported by evidence. Claims that presuppose value systems, morals, or religious beliefs cannot be supported with evidence and therefore are not argumentative theses.

Example

Individuals convicted of murder will go to hell when they die is not an argumentative thesis because its support rests on religious beliefs or values rather than evidence.

Rehabilitation programs for individuals serving life sentences should be funded because these programs reduce violence within prisons is an argumentative thesis because evidence such as case studies and statistics can be used to support it.

Focused

An argumentative thesis must be focused and narrow. A focused, narrow claim is clearer, more able to be supported with evidence, and more persuasive than a broad, general claim.

Example

The federal government should overhaul the U.S. tax code is not an effective argumentative thesis because it is too general (What part of the government? Which tax codes? What sections of those tax codes?) and would require an overwhelming amount of evidence to be fully supported.

The U.S. House of Representative should vote to repeal the federal estate tax because the revenue generated by that tax is negligible is an effective argumentative thesis because it identifies a specific actor and action and can be fully supported with evidence about the amount of revenue the estate tax generates.

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6.12.10: Practice- Argumentative Thesis Statements

Learning Objectives

- Recognize an argumentative thesis
- Evaluate an argumentative thesis

In the practice exercises below, you will use the information you learned in the previous reading to help you recognize and evaluate argumentative thesis statements. Keep in mind that a sound argumentative thesis should be debatable, assertive, reasonable, evidence based, and focused.

Practice

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Practice

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6.12.11: Introduction to Logical Fallacies

What you'll learn to do: evaluate logical fallacies in argument

Fallacies are errors or tricks of reasoning. We call it an *error* of reasoning if the fallacy occurs accidentally; we call it a *trick of reasoning* if a speaker or writer uses the fallacy in order to deceive or manipulate his or her audience. The following are reasons to avoid logical fallacies in your writing:

- Logical fallacies can ruin an otherwise effective argument.
- Logical fallacies can damage your *ethos*, or credibility, as a writer.
- Logical fallacies can distract from the purpose of the argument.

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6.12.12: Common Logical Fallacies

A logical fallacy is a flaw in reasoning or a flawed structure that undermines the validity of an argument. A fallacious argument makes productive conversation impossible. Logical fallacies are often used by politicians and the media to fool people because they have the deceptive appearance of being reasonable despite their exploitation of our emotional, intellectual, and psychological weaknesses. Having the capability to recognize fallacies in argument is one way to reduce the likelihood of such occurrences in your own writing.

Common Logical Fallacies

Ad hominem	Making an overt or subtle attack on a person's character or personal attributes.
Bandwagon	Making the claim that since others are doing something you should do it too.
Begging the question	Assuming the truth of a premise with no other evidence than the premise itself.
False dichotomy	Positing an either/or scenario.
Hasty generalization	Making a general claim based on one or a few incidents.
Post hoc	Arguing that since x and y occurred, x must have caused y.
Slippery slope	Suggesting that a relatively small step will lead to a large scale significant effect or event.
Strawman	Substituting another issue for the issue at hand.

Use the flashcards to help learn the definitions of the logical fallacies.

logical fallacy flashcards

https://h5p.cwr.olemiss.edu/h5p/embed/45

The first step to avoiding logical fallacies in your own writing is learning how to identify them in other writing. You can find examples of logical fallacies on the news, on the internet, and on the street. Sometimes these fallacies are egregious and obvious (think about the headlines you see in the tabloids), but other times the logical issues are less obvious.

In the following exercises, consider the fallacies you have learned about in this section. Try to apply those definitions to the following scenarios. Choose the fallacy that most accurately describes what's going on in each statement.

practice

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6.12.13: Spotting Logical Fallacies

Learning Objectives

- Recognize common logical fallacies
- Evaluate logical fallacies in texts

When you evaluate an argument for logical fallacies, you consider what elements of the argument, if any, would cause an audience to believe that the argument is illogical or inappropriately manipulative. If you determine that these fallacies have been committed, you should question the credibility of the author and the legitimacy of the argument. If you employ these fallacies when making your own arguments, be aware that they may undermine or destroy your credibility.

Read the following passage and note where you see logical fallacies.

Passage: against the smoking ban

The University of Mississippi recently passed a policy banning smoking on campus. I am a smoker, and I have a lot of friends who are smokers, and we all agree that this policy should be overturned. This policy is framed in terms of health outcomes and promoting individual well-being, but the University has not instituted policies regarding many other behaviors related to health, such as exercising. Furthermore, the University does nothing to sanction other forms of air pollution, such as automobile exhaust. Smoking is a right, and Americans have rights, so the smoking ban is wrong. What's next? Will we ban potato chips and Cokes on campus? Will we force-feed broccoli and carrots to first-year students? People eighteen years old and up are adults and have the ability to make their own decisions regarding their health and habits. The policy also states, "All members of the university community share in the responsibility for adhering to and enforcing this policy." That type of language asks students and faculty to be informants against each other. A college campus is a place for free expression of ideas and behaviors. It's simple: either we are a freedom-loving campus or we aren't. I choose freedom, and I believe all of America's veterans would agree with me. Perhaps the Chancellor has an ulterior motive for instituting the ban and is using smokers as a scapegoat.

Each question below will show you a section from the passage. Decide which logical fallacy best applies to the statement, or select "no fallacy."

Try It

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6.12.14: Introduction to Building Common Ground

What you'll learn to do: evaluate rhetorical approaches to building common ground

The intended audience for an argument includes those individuals or organizations that authors are trying to persuade. Arguments sometimes have unintended audiences, as well. Authors who know their intended audience, and who keep in mind possible unintended audiences, compose arguments that are more effective at provoking a response, whether that response is simply creating agreement with the author's position in a reader's mind or spurring the reader to take action to bring about the author's desired change.

Once you know who your audience is, you can do research to learn about what strategies and techniques of argument have been effective with your audience or a similar audience in the past. Such research involves analyzing arguments in order to understand their intended and potential unintended audiences and then making analogies between the audiences for arguments identified through research and your own audience.

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6.12.15: Audience Analysis

Learning Objective

- Recognize rhetorical approaches to building common ground

Watch the following video (or read the transcript) to begin thinking about intended and unintended audiences. It's easier to think about audiences for a public speech than it is for an essay, but the same rhetorical principles of audience analysis apply.

A video element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can watch it online here: http://pb.libretexts.org/wsl/?p=248

Download the Transcript

establishing context



Clementa Carlos Pinckney was a Democratic senator in the South Carolina legislature. He represented the 45th District from 2000 until his death. From 1997 through 2000, he was a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives.

While President Obama's immediate audience consists of mourners gathered in Charleston, South Carolina, to honor Reverend Pinckney, he is clearly aware of and speaking to a national audience.

Think about the video or the transcript as you answer the practice questions below.

practice

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Writing a Research Paper

7.1: Joining the Academic Conversation
7.1.1: Introduction
7.1.2: Evaluating the Important Voices
7.2: Developing a Research Question
7.3: The Purpose of Research Writing
7.4: Researched Position Paper
7.5: Choosing Your Topic
7.6: Finding Supporting Information
7.7: Gathering Your Sources
7.8: Using the Right Sources for Your Project
7.9: Developing a Research Proposal
7.10: Evaluating and Processing Your Sources
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7.12: From Annotated Bibliography to Rough Draft- How to Develop your Position
7.13: Applying Your Research
7.14: Writing Your Draft
7.15: Using Sources in Your Paper
7.16: Documenting Your Source Material
7.17: Revising Your Draft
7.18: Sample Research Paper

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SECTION OVERVIEW

7.1: Joining the Academic Conversation

7.1.1: Introduction

7.1.2: Evaluating the Important Voices

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7.1.1: Introduction

When a student writes a research essay, that essay is not written for the student alone. In section 3 on the rhetorical situation, you learned that all written works have an audience and a context. Not only is there an audience and a context for a given text, but generally a text is joining an ongoing conversation about that topic as well. If, for example, someone writes about climate change, the author is stepping into a conversation about climate change that has been happening for the past fifty years and longer. Part of joining that conversation means being able to find and evaluate which voices matter for the topic and thesis of the paper, and then building upon and responding to those people.

The twentieth century rhetorician Kenneth Burke posits that there is an "unending conversation" occurring throughout history, and his illustration of this conversation is helpful in understanding how one joins a conversation of ideas:

> 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 has 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 or 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.[1]

In this analogy, the other party-goers are the authors of primary and secondary texts that an author engages in a paper, and the person writing the research paper is the one joining the conversation. However, the student in this case has many more sources to choose from than just a few in a single conversation. There are many voices in hundreds of conversations, and it is up to you to choose which ones are most important and worth including in your argument.

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1. Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1941), 110-111. ↵

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7.1.2: Evaluating the Important Voices

In 2010, a textbook being used in fourth grade classrooms in Virginia became big news for all the wrong reasons. According to an article in *TheWashington Post*,[1]the book *Our Virginia*, by Joy Masoff,[2] had caught the attention of a parent who was helping her child do her homework. Carol Sheriff was a historian for the College of William and Mary and as she worked with her daughter using *Our Virginia*, she began to notice some glaring historical errors, not the least of which was a passage which described how thousands of African Americans fought for the South during the Civil War.

Further investigation into the book revealed that although the author had written textbooks on a variety of subjects, she was not a trained historian. The research she had done to write *Our Virginia*, and in particular the information she included about Black Confederate soldiers, was done through the internet and included sources created by groups like the Sons of Confederate Veterans, an organization which promotes views of history that de-emphasize the role of slavery in the Civil War.

How did a book with errors like these come to be used as part of the curriculum and who was at fault? Was it Masoff for using untrustworthy sources for her research? Was it the editors who allowed the book to be published with these errors intact? Was it the school board for approving the book without more closely reviewing its accuracy?

There are a number of issues at play in the case of *Our Virginia*, but there's no question that evaluating sources is an important part of the research process and doesn't just apply to internet sources. Using inaccurate, irrelevant, or poorly researched sources can affect the quality of your own work. Being able to understand and apply the concepts that follow is crucial to becoming a more savvy user and creator of information.

People who are adept at evaluating information are able to review the research process and compare and judge information and data. Individuals who evaluate information well:

Understand:

- The information and data landscape of their learning/research context;
- Issues of quality, accuracy, relevance, bias, reputation and credibility relating to information and data sources;
- How information is evaluated and published to help inform their personal evaluation process;
- The importance of consistency in data collection;
- The importance of citation in their learning/research context.

Are able to:

- Distinguish between different information resources and the information they provide;
- Choose suitable material on their search topic using appropriate criteria;
- Assess the quality, accuracy, relevance, bias, reputation and credibility of the information resources found;
- Assess the credibility of the data gathered;
- Read critically, identifying key points and arguments;
- Relate the information found to the original search strategy;
- Critically appraise and evaluate their own findings and those of others;
- Know when to stop.

Distinguishing Between Information Resources

Information is published in a variety of formats, each with its own special considerations when it comes to evaluation. When conducting your research, consider the following formats and the different ways in which each format is developed and presented.

Social Media

Social media is a quickly rising star in the landscape of information gathering. Facebook updates, tweets, wikis, and blogs have made information creators of us all and have a strong influence not just on how we communicate with each other but also on how we learn about current events or discover items of interest. Anyone can create or contribute to social media and nothing that's said is checked for accuracy before it's posted for the world to see. So do people really use social media for research? Currently, the main use for social media, like tweets and Facebook posts, is as primary sources that are treated as the objects under study rather than sources of information on a topic. But now that the Modern Language Association (MLA) has a recommended way to cite a tweet, social media may, in fact, be gaining credibility as a resource.

Websites

In addition to social media, a common place to find information is websites. Commercial organizations, educational institutions, government entities, research think tanks, and more publish blogs, reports, and statistics that could be relevant to your research. However, evaluating the credibility of web sources can be challenging. Students are often taught in high school, as a general rule of thumb, to avoid .com websites as untrustworthy and to use .org and .edu domains instead. In research, it is important to critically evaluate all web sources for trustworthiness, accuracy, and currency, regardless of domain suffix. Websites are considered popular sources, even if published by an educational institution or a government entity. Some websites, including some government websites, may be considered primary sources, which could have value in research.

News Articles

These days, social media will generally be among the first to cover a big news story, with news media writing an article or report after more information has been gathered. News articles are written by journalists who either report on an event they have witnessed firsthand, or after making contact with those more directly involved. The focus is on information that is of immediate interest to the public and these articles are written in a way that a general audience will be able to understand. These articles go through a fact-checking process, but when a story is big and the goal is to inform readers of urgent or timely information, inaccuracies may occur. In research, news articles are often best treated as primary sources, especially if they were published immediately after a current event.

Magazine Articles

While news articles and social media tend to concentrate on what happened, how it happened, who it happened to, and where it happened, magazine articles are more about understanding *why* something happened, usually with the benefit of at least a little hindsight. Writers of magazine articles also fall into the journalist category and rely heavily on investigation and interviews for research. Fact-checking in magazine articles tends to be more accurate because magazines publish less frequently than news outlets and have more time to get the facts right. Depending on the focus of the magazine, articles may cover current events or just items of general interest to the intended audience. The language may be more emotional or dramatic than the factual tone of news articles, but the articles are written at a similar reading level so as to appeal to the widest audience possible. A magazine article is considered a popular source rather than a scholarly one which gives it less weight in a research context but doesn't take away the value completely.

Scholarly Articles

Scholarly articles are written by, and for, experts in a field and generally describe formal research studies or experiments conducted to provide new insight on a topic rather than reporting current events or items of general interest. You may have heard the term "peer review" in relation to scholarly articles. This means that before an article is published, it undergoes a review process in order to confirm that the information is accurate and the research it discusses is valid. This process adds a level of credibility to the article that you would not find in a magazine or news article. Scholarly articles tend to be long and feature specialized language that is not easily understood by someone who does not already have some level of expertise on the topic. Though they may not be as easy to use, they carry a lot of weight in a research context, especially if you are working in a field related to science or technology. These sources will give you information to build on in your own original research.

Books

Books have been a staple of the research process since Gutenberg invented the printing press because a topic can be covered in more depth in a book than in most other types of sources. Also, the conventional wisdom for books is that anyone can write one, but only the best ones get published. This is becoming less true as books are published in a wider variety of formats and via a wider variety of venues than in previous eras, which is something to be aware of when using a book for research purposes. For now, the editing process for formally published books is still in place and research in the humanities, which includes topics such as literature and history, continues to be published primarily in this format.

Choosing Materials

When choosing a source for your research, what criteria do you usually use? Gauging whether the source relates to your topic at all is probably one. How high up it appears on the results list when you search may be another. Beyond that, you may base your decision at least partly on how easy it is to access.

These are all important criteria, to varying degrees, but there are other criteria you may want to keep in mind when deciding if a source will be useful to your research.

Quality

Scholarly journals and books are traditionally considered to be higher quality information sources because they have gone through a more thorough editing process that ensures the quality of their content. Generally, you also pay more to access these sources or may have to rely on a library or university to pay for access for you. Information on the Internet can also be of a high quality but there is less of a quality assurance process in place for much of that information. In the current climate, the highest quality information, even on the Internet, often requires a subscription or other form of payment for access.

Clues to a source's level of quality are closely related to thinking about how the source was produced, including what format it was published in and whether it is likely to have gone through a formal editing process prior to publication.

Accuracy

A source is accurate if the information it contains is correct. Sometimes it's easy to tell when a piece of information is simply wrong, especially if you have some prior knowledge of the subject. But if you're less familiar with the subject, inaccuracies can be harder to detect, especially when they come in subtler forms such as exaggerations or inconsistencies.

To determine whether a source is accurate, you need to look more deeply at the content of the source including where the information in the source comes from and what evidence the author uses to support their views and conclusions. It also helps to compare your source against another source. A reader of *Our Virginia* may not have reason to believe the information the author cites from the Sons of Confederate Veterans website is inaccurate, but if they compared the book against another source, the inconsistencies might become more apparent.

Relevance

Relevance has to do with deciding whether the source actually relates to your topic and, if it does, how closely it relates. Some sources may be an exact match; for others, you may need to consider a particular angle or context before you can tell whether the source applies to your topic. When searching for relevant sources, you should keep an open mind—but not too open. Don't pick something that's not really related just because it's on the first page or two of results or because it sounds good.

You can assess the relevance of a source by comparing it against your research topic or research question. Keep in mind that the source may not need to match on all points, but it should match on enough points to be usable for your research beyond simply satisfying a requirement for an assignment.

Bias

An example of bias is when someone expresses a view that is one-sided without much consideration for information that might negate what they believe. Bias is most prevalent in sources that cover controversial issues where the author may attempt to persuade their readers to one side of the issue without giving fair consideration to the other side of things. If the research topic you are using has ever been the cause of heated debate, you will need to be especially watchful for any bias in the sources you find.

Bias can be difficult to detect, particularly when we are looking at persuasive sources with which we want to agree. If you want to believe something is true, chances are you'll side with your own internal bias without consideration for whether a source exhibits bias. When deciding whether there is bias in a source, look for dramatic language and images, poorly supported evidence against an opposing viewpoint, or a strong leaning in one direction.

Reputation

Is the author of the source you have found a professor at a university or a self-published blogger? If the author is a professor, are they respected in their field or is their work heavily challenged? What about the publication itself? Is it held in high regard or relatively unknown? Digging a little deeper to find out what you can about the reputation of both the author and the publication can go a long way toward deciding whether a source is valuable.

You can investigate the reputation of an author by looking at any biographical information that is available as part of the source. Looking to see what else the author has published and whether this information has positive reviews is also important in establishing whether the author has a good reputation. The reputation of a publication can also be investigated through reviews, word-of-mouth by professionals in the field, or online databases that keep track of statistics related to a journal's credibility.

Credibility

Credibility has to do with the believability or trustworthiness of a source based on evidence such as information about the author, the reputation of the publication, and how well the source is formatted. How likely would you be to use a source that was written by someone with no expertise on a topic or a source that appeared in a publication that was known for featuring low quality information? What if the source was riddled with spelling and formatting errors? Looking at sources like these should inspire more caution.

Objectively, credibility can be determined by taking into account all of the other criteria discussed for evaluating a source. Knowing that some types of sources, such as scholarly journals, are generally considered more credible than others, such as self-published websites, may also help. Subjectively, deciding whether a source is credible may come down to a gut feeling. If something about a source doesn't sit well with you, you may decide to pass it over.

Identifying Key Points and Arguments

Evaluating information about the source from its title, author, and summary information is only the first step. The evaluation process continues when you begin to read the source in more detail and make decisions about how (or whether) you will ultimately use it for your own research.

When you begin to look more deeply at your source, pay close attention to the following features of a document.

Introduction

The purpose of the introduction to any piece that has one is to give information about what the reader can expect from the source as a whole. There are different types of introductions including forewords and prefaces that may be written by the author of the book or by someone else with knowledge of the subject. Introductory sections can include background information on why the topic was chosen, background on the author's interest in the topic, context pertaining to why the topic is important, or the lens through which the topic will be explored. Knowing this information before diving into the body of the work will help you understand the author's approach to the topic and how it might relate to the approach you are taking in your own research.

Table of Contents

Most of the time, if your source is a book or an entire website, it will be divided into sections that each cover a particular aspect of the overall topic. It may be necessary to read through all of these sections in order to get a "big picture" understanding of the information being discussed, or it may be better to concentrate only on the areas that relate most closely to your own research. Looking over the table of contents or menu will help you decide whether you need the whole source or only pieces of it.

List of References

If the source you're using is research-based, it should have a list of references that usually appear at the end of the document. Reviewing these references will give you a better idea of the kind of work the author put into their own research. Did they put as much work into evaluating their sources as you are? Can you tell from the citations if the sources used were credible? When were they published? Do they represent a fair balance of perspectives or do they all support a limited point of view? What information does the author use from these sources and in what way does he or she use that information? Use your own research skills to spy on the research habits of others to help you evaluate the source.

Evaluating Your Findings

In the case of *Our Virginia*, the author used a biased source as part of her research and the inaccurate information she got from that source affected the quality of her own work. Likewise, if anyone had used her book as part of their research, it would have set off a chain reaction, since whatever information they cited from *Our Virginia* would naturally have to be called into question, possibly diminishing the value of their own conclusions.

Evaluating the sources you use for quality, accuracy, relevance, bias, and credibility is a good first step in making sure this doesn't happen, but have you ever thought about evaluating the sources used by your own sources? This takes extra time, but looking at the reference list, bibliography, or notes section of any source you use to gauge the quality of the research done by the author of that source can be an important extra step.

Knowing When to Stop

For some researchers, the process of searching for and evaluating sources is a highly enjoyable, rewarding part of doing research. For others, it's a necessary evil on the way to constructing their own ideas and sharing their own conclusions. Whichever end of the spectrum you most closely identify with, here are a few ideas about the ever-important skill of knowing when to stop.

1. **You've satisfied the requirements for the assignment and/or your curiosity on the topic.** If you're doing research as part of a course assignment, chances are you've been given a required number of sources. Novice researchers may find this number useful to understand how much research is considered appropriate for a particular topic. However, a common mistake is to focus more on the number of sources than on the quality of those sources. Meeting that magic number is great, but not if the sources used are low quality or otherwise inappropriate for the level of research being done.
2. **You have a deadline looming.** Nothing better inspires forward motion in a research project than having to meet a deadline, whether it's set by a professor, an advisor, a publisher, or yourself. Time management skills are especially useful, but since research is a cyclical process that sometimes circles back on itself when you discover new knowledge or change direction, planning things out in minute detail may not work. Leaving yourself enough time to follow the twists and turns of the research and writing process goes a long way toward getting your work in when it's expected.
3. **You need to change your topic.** You've been searching for information on your topic for a while now. Every search seems to come up empty or full of irrelevant information. You've brought your case to a research expert, like a librarian, who has given advice on how to adjust your search or how to find potential sources you may have previously dismissed. Still nothing. It could be that your topic is too specific or that it covers something that's too new, like a current event that hasn't made it far enough in the information cycle yet. Whatever the reason, if you've exhausted every available avenue and there truly is no information on your topic of interest, this may be a sign that you need to stop what you're doing and change your topic.
4. **You're getting overwhelmed.** The opposite of not finding enough information on your topic is finding too much. You want to collect it all, read through it all, and evaluate it all to make sure you have exactly what you need. But now you're running out of room on your flash drive, your Dropbox/Google/One Drive account is getting full, and you don't know how you're going to sort through it all *and* look for more. The solution: stop looking. Go through what you have. If you find what you need in what you already have, great! If not, you can always keep looking. You don't need to find everything in the first pass. There is plenty of opportunity to do more if more is needed!

From Theory to Practice

Looking back, the *Our Virginia* case is more complicated than it may have first appeared. It wasn't just that the author based her writing on research done through the Internet. It was complicated by the nature of the sources she used as well as the effect using those sources ultimately had on the quality of her own work. These mistakes happened despite a formal editing process that should have ensured better accuracy and an approval process by the school board that should have evaluated the material more closely. With both of these processes having failed, it was up to one of the book's readers, the parent of a student who compared the information against her own specialized knowledge, to figure it all out.

Now that you know more about the theory behind evaluating sources, it's time to apply the theory. The following section will help you put source evaluation into perspective using something you probably remember from elementary school – the five Ws and H. You'll also have the opportunity to try out your new skills with several hands-on activities.

The Five Ws

You evaluate sources regularly in your day-to-day life. You evaluate which movie to see this weekend, which new restaurant to try out, and which section of a required college class to take next semester. Evaluating sources in an academic context requires many of the same skills that you already employ.

When you begin evaluating sources, what should you consider? There is no single test or checklist that you can use to determine if a source is trustworthy or appropriate. Evaluating sources requires critical examination of each source, as well as the context in which you intend to use that source.

When evaluating sources, one set of criteria that you should consider are the five Ws and H. These questions can help you begin to suss out not only the quality of your source, but whether it is appropriate for your intended use case.

Who

Understanding more about your information's source helps you determine when, how, and where to use that information. Is your author an expert on the subject? Do they have some personal stake in the argument they are making? What is the author or

information producer's background? When determining *who* is behind your source, consider the following:

- Who is the author? What are their credentials?
- What is the author's level of education, experience, and/or occupation?
- What qualifies the author to write about this topic?
- What affiliations does the author have? Could these affiliations affect their position?
- What organization or body published the information? Is it authoritative? Does it have an explicit position or bias? Is it scholarly?
- Was this information funded by a group or organization? If so, who funded it? Is there a conflict of interest or perception of bias?

What

Knowing the intended purpose of a piece of information is a key to evaluation. Understanding if the information has clear intentions, or if the information is fact, opinion or propaganda will help you decide how and why to use information. When determining *what* is the purpose of your source, consider the following:

- What information does the author present?
- Is the information clearly supported by evidence?
- Does the source have an obvious bias or prejudice?
- What information isn't presented? Does the author omit important facts or data that might disprove their argument?
- Is the article presented from multiple points of view?
- Is the author's language informal, joking, emotional, or impassioned?
- Is the source intended to inform, sell, persuade, or entertain?

Where

Determining where information comes from, if the evidence supports the information, and if the information has been reviewed or refereed can help you decide how and whether to use a source. When determining from *where* a source derives its information, consider the following:

- Where does the information in the article come from?
- Where can I find more information about the topic?
- Is the source well-documented? Does it include footnotes, citations or a bibliography?
- Is information in the source presented as fact, opinion or propaganda? Are biases clear?
- Can you verify information from referenced information in the source?

When

One of the most important and interesting steps to take as you begin researching a subject is selecting the resources that will help you build your thesis and support your assertions. Many topics require you to pay special attention to how current your resource is —because they are time sensitive, because they have evolved so much over the years, or because new research comes out on the topic so frequently. When evaluating the currency of an article, consider the following:

- When was the item written and how frequently does the publication it is in come out?
- Is there evidence of newly added or updated information in the item?
- If the information is dated, is it still suitable for your topic?
- How frequently does information change about your topic?
- Has the information been updated recently?

Why

As you consider each source, consider the sheer quantity of information available to you. A simple Google search may retrieve billions of search results in response to a keyword search on your topic. Why is this source the best one to use for your particular topic and project? Remember that you're not looking for the first source you can find on a topic – you're looking for the one that is going to provide the strongest evidence for your information needs. When considering *why* you should use a particular source, consider the following:

- Why is this information better than other available sources?
- Why is this information considered high quality, scholarly, or trustworthy?

- Why does this article support or undermine your research hypothesis?
- Is the information written clearly and free of typographical and grammatical mistakes? Does the source look to be edited before publication? A clean, well-presented paper does not always indicate accuracy, but usually at least means more eyes have been on the information.

How

Understanding what resources are most applicable to your subject and why they are applicable can help you focus and refine your thesis. Many topics are broad and searching for information on them produces a wide range of resources. Narrowing your topic and focusing on resources specific to your needs can help reduce the piles of information and help you focus on what is truly important to read and reference. When determining *how* a source may be relevant to your topic, consider the following:

- How does this relate to what you already know?
- How do you intend to use this information?
- Does the item contain information relevant to your argument or thesis?
- Does the information presented support or refute your ideas?
- If the information refutes your ideas, how will this change your argument?

Conclusion

When you feel overwhelmed by the information you are finding, thinking through the 5Ws and H can help you determine which information is the most useful to your research topic. Remember that no test or checklist is guaranteed to tell you if a source is trustworthy, but considering these factors can help you better understand whether a source is appropriate for your topic and research project.

Practice Activity

The original version of this chapter contained H5P content. You may want to remove or replace this element.

This section contains material from:

Bernnard, Deborah, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, and Daryl Bullis. *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, edited by Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson. Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014. http://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

1. Kevin Sieff, "Virginia 4th-Grade Textbook Criticized Over Claims on Black Confederate Soldiers," *The Washington Post*, October 20, 2010, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/19/AR2010101907974.html. ↵
2. Joy Masoff, *Our Virginia: Past & Present*, (Windsor, CT: Five Ponds Press, 2010). ↵

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7.2: Developing a Research Question

I write out of ignorance. I write about the things I don't have any resolutions for, and when I'm finished, I think I know a little bit more about it. I don't write out of what I know. It's what I don't know that stimulates me. I merely know enough to get started. — Toni Morrison[1]

Think of a research paper as an opportunity to deepen (or create) knowledge about a topic that matters to you. Just as Toni Morrison states that she is stimulated by what she doesn't yet know, a research paper assignment can be interesting and meaningful if it allows you to explore what you don't know.

Research, at its best, is an act of knowledge *creation*, not just an extended book report. This knowledge creation is the essence of any great educational experience. Instead of just listening to lectures, you get to design the learning project that will ultimately result in you experiencing, and then expressing, your own intellectual growth. You get to read what you choose, thereby becoming an expert on your topic.

That sounds, perhaps, like a lofty goal. But by spending some quality time brainstorming, reading, thinking or otherwise tuning into what matters to you, you can end up with a workable research topic that will lead you on an enjoyable research journey.

The best research topics are meaningful to you; therefore, you should:

- Choose a topic that you want to understand better;
- Choose a topic that you want to read about and devote time to;
- Choose a topic that is perhaps a bit out of your comfort zone;
- Choose a topic that allows you to understand others' opinions and how those opinions are shaped;
- Choose something that is relevant to you, personally or professionally;
- Do not choose a topic because you think it will be "easy" – those can end up being quite challenging.

Brainstorming Ideas for a Research Topic

There are many ways to come up with a good topic. The best thing to do is to give yourself time to think about what you really want to commit days and weeks to reading, thinking, researching, more reading, writing, more researching, reading and writing on.

It can be difficult to come up with a topic from scratch, so consider looking at some information sources that can give you some ideas. Check out your favorite news sources or take a look at a library databases like *CQ Researcher* or *Point of Review Reference Center.*

As you browse through databases or news sources, ask yourself some of the following questions: Which question(s) below interest you? Which question(s) below spark a desire to respond? A good topic is one that moves you to think, to do, to want to know more, to want to say more. Here are some questions you might use in your search for topics:

1. What news stories do you often see, but want to know more about?
2. What (socio-political) argument do you often have with others that you would love to work on strengthening?
3. What are the key controversies or current debates in the field of work that you want to go into?
4. What is a problem that you see at work that needs to be better publicized or understood?
5. What is the biggest issue facing [specific group of people: by age, by race, by gender, by ethnicity, by nationality, by geography, by economic standing? choose a group]
6. What area/landmark/piece of history in your home community are you interested in?
7. What local problem do you want to better understand?
8. Is there some element of the career that you would like to have one day that you want to better understand?
9. What would you love to become an expert on?
10. What are you passionate about?

From Topic to Research Question

Once you have decided on a research topic, an area for academic exploration that matters to you, it is time to start thinking about what you want to learn about that topic.

The goal of college-level research assignments is never going to be to simply "go find sources" on your topic. Instead, think of sources as helping you to answer a research question or a series of research questions about your topic. These should not be simple

questions with simple answers, but rather complex questions about which there is no easy or obvious answer.

A compelling research question is one that may involve controversy, or may have a variety of answers, or may not have any single, clear answer. All of that is okay and even desirable. If the answer is an easy and obvious one, then there is little need for argument or research.

Make sure that your research question is clear, specific, researchable and limited (but not too limited). Most of all, make sure that you are curious about your own research question. If it does not matter to you, researching it will feel incredibly boring and tedious.

This section contains material from:

Zickel, Emilie. "Developing a Research Question." In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/developing-a-research-question/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

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1. Toni Morrison, "Toni Morrison," in *Black Women Writers at Work*, ed. Claudia Tate (Continuum Publish Company, 1983), 130. ↵

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7.3: The Purpose of Research Writing

Who has written poetry about exile? **What** roles did women play in the American Revolution? **Where** do cicadas go during their 'off' years? **When** did bookmakers start using movable type? **Why** was the Great Wall of China built? **How** does the human brain create, store, and retrieve memories?

You may know the answers to these questions off the top of your head. If you are like most people, however, you find answers to tough questions like these by searching the Internet, visiting a library, or asking others for information. To put it simply, you perform research.

Whether or not you realize it, you probably already perform research in your everyday life. When your boss, your instructor, or a family member asks you a question that you don't know the answer to, you locate relevant information, analyze your findings, and share your results. Locating, analyzing, and sharing information are key steps in the research process. In this chapter, you will learn more about each step. By developing your research writing skills, you will prepare yourself to answer challenging questions.

Sometimes you perform research simply to satisfy your own curiosity. Once you find the answer to your questions, your search may be over, or it may lead to more in-depth research about that topic or about another topic. Other times, you want to communicate what you have learned to your peers, your family, your teachers, or even the editors of magazines, newspapers, or journals. In your personal life, you might simply discuss the topic with your friends. In more formal situations, such as in business and school, you communicate your findings in writing or in a presentation. A report may simply relay the results of your research in an organized manner. In contrast, a research paper presents an original thesis about a topic and develops that thesis with ideas and information gathered from a variety of sources. In a research paper, you use facts, interpretations, and opinions you encounter in your research to create a narrative and support an argument about your topic.

A student in an art history course might write a research paper about an artist's work or an aesthetic movement. A student in a psychology course might write a research paper about current findings in childhood development. No matter what field of study you pursue, you will most likely be asked to write a research paper in your college degree program and to apply the skills of research and writing in your career. For similar reasons as professionals, students do research to answer specific questions, to share their findings with others, to increase their understanding of challenging topics, and to strengthen their analytical skills.

Having to write a research paper may feel intimidating at first. After all, researching and writing a long paper requires a lot of time, effort, and organization. However, its challenges have rewards. The research process allows you to gain expertise on a topic of your choice. The writing process helps you to remember what you learned and to understand it on a deeper level. Thus writing a research paper can be a great opportunity to explore a topic that particularly interests you and to grow as a person.

Writing at Work

Knowing how to write a good research paper is a valuable skill that will serve you well throughout your career. For example, laboratory technicians and information technology professionals do research to learn about the latest technological developments in their fields. A small business owner may conduct research to learn about the latest trends in his or her industry. A freelance writer will need to research his or her topics to write informed, up-to-date articles. Whether you are developing a new product, studying the best way to perform a procedure, discovering the challenges and opportunities in your field of employment, or learning about how to find a job, you will use research techniques to guide your exploration. Because effective communication is essential to any company, employers seek to hire people who can write clearly and professionally.

? Exercise 1

Think about the job of your dreams. How might you use research writing skills to perform that job? Create a list of ways in which strong researching, organizing, writing, and critical thinking skills could help you succeed at your dream job. How might these skills help you obtain that job?

Process Overview

How does a research paper grow from a folder of notes to a polished final draft? No two projects are identical, but most writers of research papers follow six basic steps.

Step 1: Choosing a Topic

To narrow the focus of your topic, brainstorm using Prewriting Techniques. Starting with your topic, formulate a specific research question—a broad, open-ended question that will guide your research—as well as propose a possible answer, or a working thesis.

Step 2: Planning and Scheduling

Before you start researching your topic, take time to plan your researching and writing schedule. Research projects can take days, weeks, or even months to complete. Creating a schedule is a good way to ensure that you do not end up being overwhelmed by all the work you have to do as the deadline approaches. During this step of the process, it is also a good idea to plan the resources and organizational tools you will use to keep yourself on track throughout the project. Flowcharts, calendars, and checklists can all help you stick to your schedule.

Step 3: Conducting Research

When going about your research, you will likely use a variety of sources—anything from books and periodicals to video presentations and in-person interviews. However, you should pay close attention to instructions; instructors often specify what kinds of sources they require for research papers. Some may assign you to only use scholarly (peerreviewed) sources. For some assignments, your sources might include both primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources provide firsthand information or raw data. For example, surveys, in-person interviews, historical documents, works of art, and works of literature are primary sources. Secondary sources, such as biographies, literary reviews, or news articles, include some analysis or interpretation of the information presented. As you conduct research, you should take detailed, careful notes about your discoveries. You should also evaluate the reliability of each source you find, especially sources that are not peer-reviewed.

Step 4: Organizing Your Research and Ideas

When your research is complete, you will organize your findings and decide which sources to cite in your paper. You will also have an opportunity to evaluate the evidence you have collected and determine whether it supports your thesis, or the focus of your paper. You may decide to adjust your thesis or conduct additional research to ensure that your thesis is well supported.

Step 5: Drafting Your Paper

Now you are ready to combine your research findings with your critical analysis of the results in a rough draft. You will incorporate source materials into your paper and discuss each source thoughtfully in relation to your thesis or purpose statement. It is important to pay close attention to standard conventions for citing sources in order to avoid plagiarism, which is the practice of using someone else's words without acknowledging the source. Later in this chapter, you will learn how to incorporate sources in your paper and avoid some of the most common pitfalls of attributing information.

Step 6: Revising and Editing Your Paper

In the final step of the research writing process, you will revise and polish your paper. You might reorganize your paper's structure or revise for unity and cohesion, ensuring that each element in your paper smoothly and logically flows into the next. You will also make sure that your paper uses an appropriate and consistent tone. Once you feel confident in the strength of your writing, you will edit your paper for proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and formatting. When you complete this final step, you will have transformed a simple idea or question into a thoroughly researched and well-written paper of which you can be proud.

Writing a good research paper takes time, thought, and effort. Although this assignment is challenging, it is manageable. Focusing on one step at a time will help you develop a thoughtful, informative, well-supported research paper.

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7.4: Researched Position Paper

Now that you have found a topic to research, it is time to begin the research process. Though you may have an idea of what you think your argument will be at this point, it's important to start your research with an open mind. It's often helpful to formulate your topic as a research question. Research questions are open-ended questions that you explore as you figure out the direction your topic will go and inform or shape your thesis statement. For example, if your topic is on first-generation students and financial aid, you might have a research question such as "What is the long-term impact of student loans on first-generation college students?" Using such a question as you begin your research leaves you a lot of flexibility to adjust your position, and therefore your thesis, as you uncover new information.

Using that research question as the foundation for your research, you can begin your proposal. This is oftentimes the first step in the process of writing a researched position paper. Basically, a researched position paper is one where you take a stance on a chosen topic and defend your position with qualitative and quantitative research found in scholarly or academic sources. While you might also include popular sources, you'll want to make certain you incorporate evidence from a body of scholars whose work can be used to support the position you are taking. The difference between a descriptive or narrative research paper and a position paper is the argument – you are doing more than simply reporting facts. In a researched position paper, you are placing yourself in dialogue with a scholarly community and taking a stance on a topic about which you feel strongly. The first formal step is the proposal.

A proposal is quite simply a method for thinking out loud on paper. While all instructors have their own specifications, typically a proposal is less formal than the rough draft and can range in length from ½-1 full page in length. In the proposal, you state the topic about which you are researching and why you are interested in it. Since this is the preliminary stage, it's okay to say that you do not know if you can defend your chosen position. The proposal is the place to begin exploration. It's a good place to talk about your research question and, based on the information that you've found so far, where your thesis begins to grow. Some instructors may ask that you also state what you know about the topic, what potential sources you might use, and what you think you need to learn before fully developing your selected topic. In some courses, the proposal serves as a written dialogue between students and instructors and provides some foundational plans for the research process.

The next step is the annotated bibliography. Later in this section, we detail for you how to write an annotated bibliography which is basically the step where you locate sources to defend your position and then summarize those sources for their strengths and weaknesses as applied to your topic.

After the annotated bibliography, the formal writing process begins with a first rough draft. Typically, you will be given a page length or word count specification within the assignment parameters so that you'll have an idea of how much is expected of you at this stage. In the first rough draft, your focus should be on developing your thesis and supporting it throughout the body of your paper. While many students get stuck on the introduction, this isn't really the place to start your research. For this stage of the paper, you want to make sure the content surrounding your topic is strong with topic sentences connecting back to the thesis in every paragraph.

Sometimes, your instructor may ask for a second rough draft before final submission. If so, this is the place for you to take feedback from a peer reviewer or writing center tutor and fine tune your essay. Use the feedback you receive to check that your position is consistently supported throughout the essay and that you are using evidence correctly to support your position. Reading the draft out loud can also help you find missing elements or spaces for enrichment before the final draft submission, or the backwards/reverse outlining method discussed in section 2.4 might be helpful.

The final draft will be your best polished effort at defending your chosen topic and position after going through the rhetorical strategies defined by your instructor. Depending upon style format, you may or may not need an abstract in the final draft. An abstract is a brief summary of the topic you are discussing in the paper, but it does not give your conclusion. At the end of your final draft you'll need to include your Works Cited/References page. This will be easily compiled from your annotated bibliography but remember – the annotations do NOT go into the final Works Cited/References page. Only the citations are included in the final draft. Keep in mind that nothing is ever perfect, but you want to strive to present a solid essay that utilizes scholarly, peer reviewed sources to defend and support the position you are taking on your chosen topic. For the rest of this section, we will provide information on how to find the best sources for your paper as well as how to develop the annotated bibliography.

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7.5: Choosing Your Topic

Your first step is to choose a topic and then to develop research questions and a working thesis. It's important to set aside adequate time for this part of the process. Fully exploring ideas will help you build a solid foundation for your paper.

Identifying Potential Topics

When you choose a topic for a research paper, you are making a major commitment. Your choice will help determine whether you enjoy the lengthy process of research and writing—and whether your final paper fulfills the assignment requirements. If you choose your topic hastily, you may later find it difficult to work with your topic. By taking your time and choosing carefully, you can ensure that this assignment is not only challenging but also rewarding.

Writers understand the importance of choosing a topic that fulfills the assignment requirements and fits the assignment's purpose and audience. Choosing a topic that genuinely interests you is also crucial. You instructor may provide a list of suggested topics or ask you to develop a topic on your own. You may find inspiration for topic ideas in your everyday life, by browsing magazines, or looking at lists of topics or themes in online databases such Opposing Viewpoints, CQ Researcher Online, Bloom's Literary Reference Online, and Literature Resource Center. In addition to Prewriting Techniques, use tools on the Web, such as Topic-o-rama and Wridea, to help you brainstorm your topic.

You may benefit from identifying several possibilities before committing to one idea. Building a list of potential topics will help you to identify additional, related topics. In this chapter, you will follow a writer named Jorge, who is studying healthcare administration, as he prepares a research paper. Jorge was assigned to write a research paper on current debates about healthy living for an introductory course in health care. Although a general topic was selected for the students, Jorge had to decide which specific issues interested him. He brainstormed the following list of possibilities:

Example 7.5.1:

- Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) in the news
- Sexual education programs
- Hollywood and eating disorders
- Americans' access to public health information
- Medial portrayals of health care reform
- Depictions of drugs on television
- The effect of the Internet on mental health
- Popularized diets (such as low-carbohydrate diets)
- Fear of pandemics (bird flu, H1N1, SARS)
- Electronic entertainment and obesity
- Advertisements for prescription drugs
- Public education and disease prevention

Focusing on a Topic

After identifying potential topics, you will need to evaluate your list and choose one topic to pursue as the focus of your research paper. Discussing your ideas with your instructor, peers, and tutors will help ensure that you choose a manageable topic that fits the requirements of the assignment. The following are some questions to consider:

- Will you be able to find enough information about the topic?
- Can you take an arguable position on the topic?
- Is the topic too broad or too narrow for the scope of the assignment? If so, can you modify the topic so it is more manageable?

You will also need to narrow your topic so you can formulate a concise, manageable thesis about it. Most writers find that the topics they listed during brainstorming or idea mapping are broad—too broad for the scope of the assignment. Working with an overly broad topic, such as sexual education programs or popularized diets, can be frustrating and overwhelming. Each topic has so many facets that it would be impossible to cover them all in a college research paper. However, more specific choices, such as the pros and cons of sexual education in kids' television programs or the physical effects of the South Beach diet, are specific enough to write about without being so narrow that they can't sustain an entire research paper. A good research paper provides focused, in-depth information and analysis. If your topic is too broad, you will find it difficult to do more than skim the surface when you

research it and write about it. To narrow your focus, explore your topic in writing. Also, conduct preliminary research, including discussing the topic with others.

You may be asking yourself, "How am I supposed to narrow my topic when I haven't even begun researching yet?" In fact, you may already know more than you realize. Review your list and identify your top two or three topics. Set aside some time to explore each one through Prewriting Techniques. Taking the time to focus on your topic may yield fresh angles. For example, Jorge knew that he was especially interested in the topic of diet fads, but he also knew that it was much too broad for his assignment. He used freewriting to explore his thoughts so he could narrow his topic. Read Jorge's following ideas from freewriting.

> *Our instructors are always saying that accurate, up-to-date information is crucial in encouraging people to make better choices about their health. I don't think the media does a very good job of providing that, though. Every time I go on the Internet, I see tons of ads for the latest 'miracle food'. One week it's acai berries, the next week it's green tea, and then six months later I see a news story saying all the fabulous claims about acai berries and green tea are overblown! Advice about weight loss is even worse. Think about all the diet books that are out there! Some say that a low-fat diet is best; some say you should cut down on carbs; and some make bizarre recommendations like eating half a grapefruit with every meal. I don't know how anybody is supposed to make an informed decision about what to eat when there's so much confusing, contradictory information. I bet even doctors, nurses, and dieticians have trouble figuring out what information is reliable and what is just the latest hype.*

Another way that writers focus on a topic is by conducting preliminary research. Talk about your ideas with your classmates, friends, and family. Like freewriting, exploratory reading can help you identify interesting angles. Surfing the web is a good way to start. Find out what people are saying about your topic in online newspapers, magazines, blogs, and discussion boards. Keep in mind that the reliability of online sources varies greatly. In this exploratory phase of your research, you do not need to evaluate sources as closely as you will later; however, use common sense as you refine your paper topic. If you read a fascinating blog comment that gives you a new idea, search for some fully developed sources on that topic to see if it's worth pursuing. If you are writing a research paper for a specialized course, look back through your notes and course activities to identify potential topics. Remind yourself of reading assignments and class discussions that especially engaged you. Doing so can help you identify topics to pursue. If the readings or viewings assigned in your course deal with your topic, then review and take notes on those materials. Librarians and instructors can help you to determine if there are enough sources available on your topic, or if there are so many sources that it would be wise to narrow your topic further.

Jorge's freewriting exercise helped him realize that the assigned topic of current debates about healthy living intersected with a few of his own interests—diet, nutrition, and obesity. Preliminary online research and discussions with his classmates strengthened his impression that many people are confused or misled by media coverage of these subjects. Jorge decided to focus his paper on a topic that had garnered a great deal of media attention—low-carbohydrate diets. He wanted to find out whether low-carbohydrate diets were as effective as their proponents claimed.

Writing at Work

At work, you may need to research a topic quickly to find general information. This information can be useful in understanding trends in a given industry or generating competition. For example, a company may research a competitor's prices and use the information when pricing their own product. You may find it useful to skim a variety of sources and take notes on your findings.

? Exercise 2

Set a timer for five minutes. Use prewriting techniques to create a list of topics you would be interested in researching for a paper about the influence of the Internet on social networking. Which social networking sites do you and your friends use? Do you closely follow a particular social media website, such as Twitter? Would you like to learn more about a certain industry, such as online dating? Would you like to learn more about people's use of the Internet to build support for social causes? List as many ideas related to this topic as you can.

? Exercise 3

Choose two topics from the list you created above. Spend five minutes freewriting about each of these topics. Choose the topic about which you more enjoyed freewriting. Then, review your freewriting to identify possible areas of focus.

? Exercise 4

Collaborative exercise: Swap lists of potential topics with a classmate. Select one or two topics on your classmate's list about which you would like to learn more. Explain to your classmate why you find those topics interesting. Ask your classmate which of the topics on your list s/he would like to learn more about and why.

Determining Paths of Inquiry

Your freewriting and preliminary research have helped you choose a focused, manageable topic for your research paper. To work with your topic successfully, you will need to determine what exactly you want to learn about it—and what you want to say about it. Before you begin conducting in-depth research, you will further define your focus by developing research questions and a working thesis.

By forming research questions about your topic, you are setting a goal for your research. Determine your main question—the primary focus of your paper—and several subquestions that you will need to research in more depth to answer your main question. Your main research question should be substantial enough to form the guiding principle of your paper—but focused enough to guide your research. A strong research question requires you not only to find information but also to put together different pieces of information, interpret and analyze them, and figure out what you think. As you consider potential research questions, ask yourself whether they would be too hard or too easy to answer. Review the results of your prewriting, and skim through your preliminary research. From these, write both simple, factual questions and more complex questions that would require analysis and interpretation to answer.

Below are the research questions Jorge will use to focus his research. Notice that his main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. Jorge will need to research his subquestions, which address narrower topics, to answer his main question.

Topic: Low-carbohydrate diets

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

Subquestions:

- Who can benefit from following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- When did low-carbohydrate diets become a 'hot' topic in the media?
- Where do average consumers get information about diet and nutrition?
- Why has the low-carb approach received so much media attention?
- How do low-carb diets work?

A working thesis concisely states a writer's initial answer to the main research question. It does not merely state a fact or present a subjective opinion. Instead, it expresses a debatable idea or claim that you hope to prove through research. Your working thesis is called a working thesis for a reason: it is subject to modification. You may adapt your thinking in light of your research findings. Let your working thesis serve as a guide to your research, but do not hesitate to change your path as you learn about your topic.

One way to determine your working thesis is to consider how you would complete statements that begin, "I believe…" or "My opinion is…". These first-person phrases are useful starting points even though you may eventually omit them from sentences in your research paper. Generally, formal research papers use an assertive, objective voice and, therefore, do not include first-person pronouns. Some readers associate I with informal, subjective writing. Some readers think the first-person point of view diminishes the impact of a claim. For these reasons, some instructors will tell you not to use I in research papers.

Jorge began his research with a strong point of view based on his preliminary writing and research. Read his working thesis statement, below, which presents the point he will argue. Notice how it states Jorge's tentative answer to his research question.

Main research question: Are low-carb diets as effective as they have sometimes been portrayed to be by the mass media?

Working thesis statement: Low-carb diets do not live up to the media hype surrounding them.

Writing at Work

Before you begin a new project at work, you may have to develop a project summary document that states the purpose of the project, explains why it would be a wise use of company resources, and briefly outlines the steps involved in completing the project. This type of document is similar to a research proposal for an academic purpose. Both define and limit a project, explain its value, discuss how to proceed, and identify what resources you will use.

Exercise 5

Using the topic you have selected, write your main research question and at least four subquestions. Check that your main research question is appropriately complex for your assignment.

Exercise 6

Write a working thesis statement that presents your preliminary answer to the research question you wrote above. Think about whether your working thesis statement presents an idea or claim that could be supported or refuted by evidence from research.

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7.6: Finding Supporting Information

Harry and Emma Dennis have lived in Texas for 25 years. They work as teachers in the Fort Worth Independent School District. Lately, they have been closely following the debate about hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, in Texas and are concerned about their ability to influence the course of fracking in the future. Although they don't own much land, they are worried about the possible adverse effects on drinking water, disruption to their environment, and the influx of people that fracking-related jobs will bring into their city. Emma Dennis is considering running for public office in her town to have a more powerful voice in the fracking debate. To receive the backing of her local political party, Emma needs to present some persuasive arguments against hydraulic fracking that are well thought out and scientifically sound. She needs to engage in substantial research on this issue so that she can present herself as an expert.

At this point, all that Emma really knows about fracking is what she has heard from neighbors and news shows. How will she proceed with her research? Emma's intentions are commendable and she knows she will have to fill in the information gaps in her fracking-issue-knowledge before she can be taken seriously as a candidate for city office. Knowing that you don't have sufficient information to solve an information need is one important aspect of information literacy. It enables you to obtain that missing information.

Different Information Formats and Their Characteristics

In addition to knowing that you are missing essential information, another component of information literacy is understanding that the information you seek may be available in different formats such as books, journal articles, government documents, blog postings, and news items. Each format has a unique value. Figure 7.5.1[1] below represents a common process of information dissemination. When an event happens, we usually hear about it from news sources—broadcast, web, and print. More in-depth exploration and analysis of the event often comes from government studies and scholarly journal articles. Deeper exploration, as well as an overview of much of the information available about the event, is often published in book format.

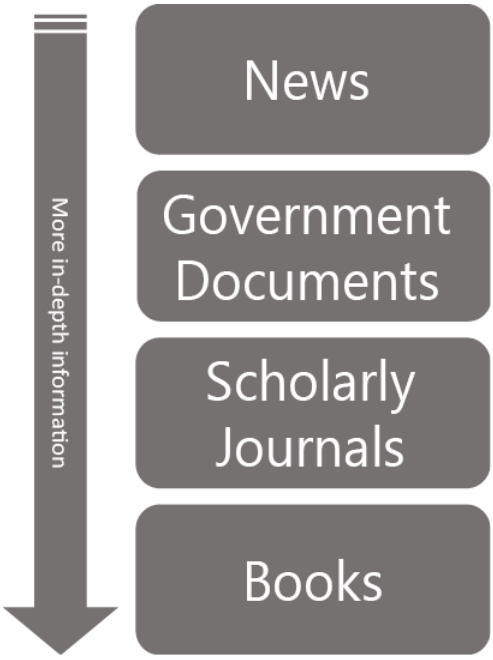


Figure 7.5.1: Information sources from less in-depth to more in-depth

Emma realizes that she needs to obtain an overview of the whole fracking debate. She needs to determine how severe the consequences of fracking could be and what is actually involved in the fracking process. Where can she find such an overview and how can she trust that the overview is accurate and complete?

Emma believes that she can find this information online and uses Google to search the World Wide Web. She quickly finds that there is an overwhelming amount of online information about fracking. Her search has resulted in more than 11,000,000 sites. Emma knows that she doesn't have time to look through all of these resources, and those that she does examine do not provide a comprehensive overview of the issues. She also notices that many of the sites are obviously advocating their own point of view.

A better first step for Emma to take is to identify a library that contains academic resources so that she will have access to more scholarly treatments of the subject. Emma can use the Texas A&M University Libraries' Quick Search or Worldcat.org which will allow her to search numerous academic libraries at once.

Library Catalogs

A library catalog is a database that contains all of the items located in a library as well as all of the items to which the library has access. It allows you to search for items by title, author, subject, and keyword. A keyword is a word that is found anywhere within the record of an item in the catalog. A catalog record displays information that is pertinent to one item, which could be a book, a journal, a government document, or a video or audio recording.

If you search by subject in an academic library catalog you can take advantage of the controlled vocabulary created by the Library of Congress. Controlled vocabulary consists of terms or phrases that have been selected to describe a concept. For example, the Library of Congress has selected the phrase *motion picture* to represent films and movies. So, if you are looking for books about movies, you would enter the phrase *motion picture* into the search box. Controlled vocabulary is important because it helps pull together all of the items about one topic. In this example, you would not have to conduct individual searches for movies, then motion pictures, then film; you could just search once for motion pictures and retrieve all the items on movies and film. You can discover subject terms in item catalog records.

Many libraries provide catalog discovery interfaces that provide cues to help refine a search. This makes it easier to find items on specific topics. For example, if Emma enters the search terms *hydraulic fracturing* into a catalog with a discovery interface, the results page will include suggestions for refinements including several different aspects of the topic. Emma can click on any of these suggested refinements to focus her search.

Using this method, Emma finds several good resources on her topic. Now, she needs to locate them. The Texas A&M University Libraries' Quick Search will show where the book is located and whether the book is checked out.

Why should Emma choose books instead of another format? Books can provide an overview of a broad topic. Often, the author has gathered the information from multiple sources and created an easy to understand overview. Emma can later look for corroborating evidence in government documents and journal articles. Books are a good information resource for this stage of her research.

Once Emma starts to locate useful information resources, she realizes that there are further gaps in her knowledge. How does she decide which books to use? She needs the most current information because she certainly doesn't want to get caught citing outdated information.

Looking at the publication date will help her to choose the most recent items. How can she get these books? She is not a Texas A&M University student or faculty member.

Interlibrary loan services at her public library will allow her to access books from an academic library or the college in her area may allow community members to borrow materials. There is a wealth of knowledge contained in the resources of academic and public libraries throughout the United States. Single libraries can't hope to collect all of the resources available on a topic. Fortunately, libraries are happy to share their resources and they do this through interlibrary loan. Interlibrary loan allows you to borrow books and other information resources regardless of where they are located. If you know that a book exists, ask your library to request it through their interlibrary loan program. This service is available at academic libraries and at most public libraries.

Checking for Further Knowledge Gaps

Emma has had a chance to review the books that she chose and although her understanding of the issues associated with fracking has improved, she still needs more specific information from the point of view of the energy industry, the government, and the scientific community. Emma knows that if she doesn't investigate all points of view, she will not be able to speak intelligently about the issues involved in the fracking debate. Where will she get this information? Because this information should be as current as possible, much of it will not be available in book format. Emma will need to look for scholarly journal articles and government documents. It is not likely that the public library will have the depth and scope of information that Emma now needs. Fortunately, Emma has just enrolled in a class at Texas A&M University and is able to use the resources at this academic library. However, when Emma visits the library, she finds that the amount of information available is overwhelming. There are many databases that will help Emma find journal articles on almost any topic. There are also many kinds of government information, some in article format, some as documents, and some as published rules and regulations. Emma suddenly feels out of her element and doesn't have any idea of where to start her research.

Databases

Emma should start her search for journal articles with research databases. Research databases contain records of journal articles, documents, book chapters, and other resources. Online library catalogs differ from other research databases in that they contain only the items available through a particular library or library system. Research databases are often either broad or comprehensive collections and are not tied to the physical items available at any one library. Many databases provide the full text of articles and can be searched by subject, author, or title. Another type of database provides just the information about articles and may provide tools for you to find the full text in another database. The databases that contain resources for a vast array of subjects are referred to as general or multidisciplinary databases. Other databases are devoted to a single subject and are known as subject-specific databases. Databases are made up of:

- **Records.** A record contains descriptive information that is pertinent to one item which may be a book, a chapter, an article, a document, or other information unit.
- **Fields.** These are part of the record and they contain information that pertains to one aspect of an item such as the title, author, publication date, and subject.
- **The subject field can sometimes be labeled subject heading or descriptor.** This is the field that contains controlled vocabulary. Controlled vocabulary in a database is similar to controlled vocabulary in a Library Catalog, but each database usually has a unique controlled vocabulary unrelated to Library of Congress classifications. Many databases will make their controlled vocabulary available in a thesaurus. If the database you are searching does not have a thesaurus, use the subject field in a record to find relevant subject terms.

Below in Figure 7.5.2[2] is Emma's search in the Quick Search database on the library homepage. The Quick Search includes sources from a number of different databases as well as the library catalog, so it's a good place to start if you're not quite sure which database to try. Emma typed the word *fracking* in the search box, but when she looks at her results, she sees that the term *hydraulic fracturing* is listed as a subject term. This tells Emma that hydraulic fracturing may be the term the library uses for fracking. She can add *hydraulic fracturing* to her search terms by entering *fracking* OR *hydraulic fracturing* in the search box. Once she has revised her search to include the controlled vocabulary term, she will want to limit her search results to the most relevant sources.

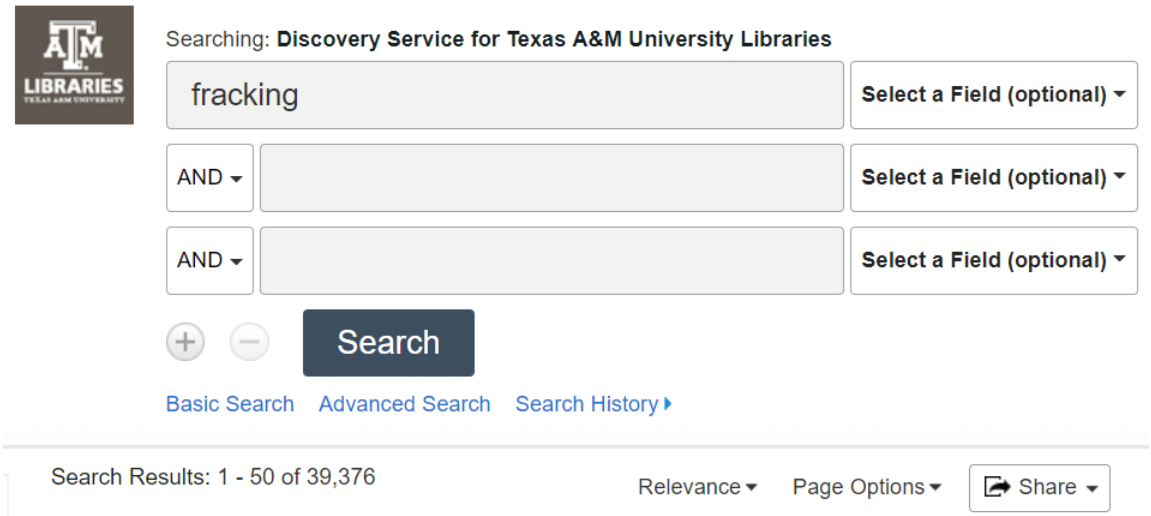


Figure 7.5.2: TAMU Libraries Quick Search Results

Boolean Operators

One way to limit a database search is to use the Boolean operators discussed earlier in section 7.3. Remember that Boolean operators are the words *AND*, *OR*, and NOT and you can use them in a database search to narrow or broaden your search results. You can usually find these words in the advanced search query area of a database.

AND

And will narrow your search. For example, if you are interested in freshwater fishing you would enter the terms *fish AND freshwater*. Your results would then include records that only contained both of these words. The green overlapping area in Figure 7.5.3[3] represents the results from the *fish AND freshwater* search.

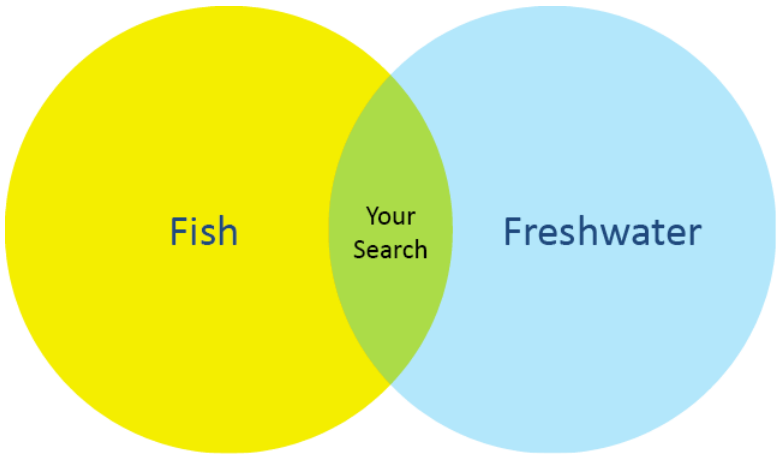


Figure 7.5.3: AND Venn Diagram

OR

OR will broaden your search and is usually used with synonyms. If you are interested in finding information on mammals found in the Atlantic Ocean, you could enter the terms *whales OR dolphins*. The circles below in Figure 7.5.4[4] represent the *OR* search. All of the records that contain one or another, or both of your search terms, will be in your results list.

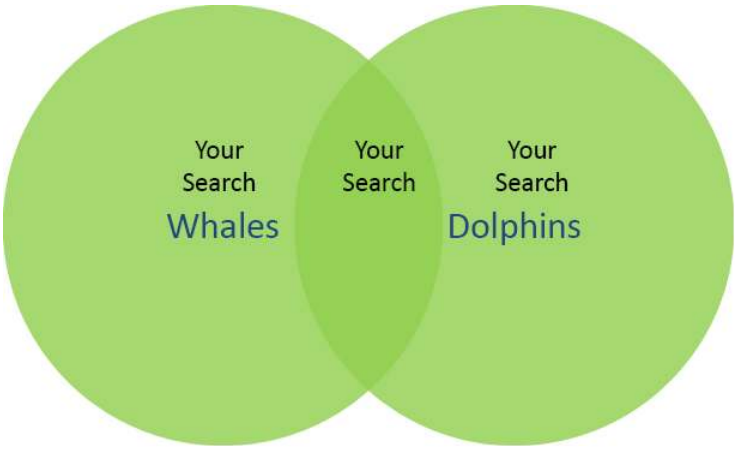


Figure 7.5.4: OR Venn Diagram

NOT

NOT will eliminate a term from your results. If you were looking for information on all Atlantic Ocean fish except Bluefish, you would enter *fish NOT bluefish*. The larger green circle in Figure 7.5.5[5] represents the results that you would retrieve with this search.

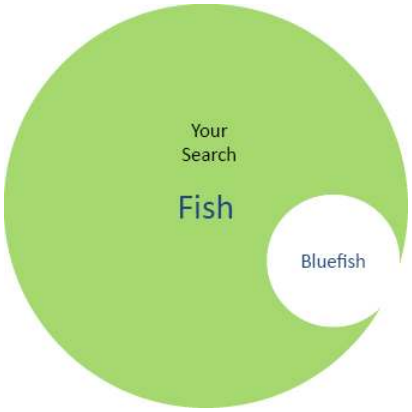


Figure 7.5.5: NOT Venn Diagram

Let's go back to Emma's search in the TAMU Libraries' Quick Search Database. If you remember, she searched the controlled vocabulary term, *hydraulic fracturing*. She can use *AND* with the phrase "*Bartnett Shale*" to focus and limit her results. Emma's search query is now *hydraulic fracturing AND "Bartnett Shale*." You can see this represented below in Figure 7.5.6 [6] The overlapping area represents the records this search will retrieve.

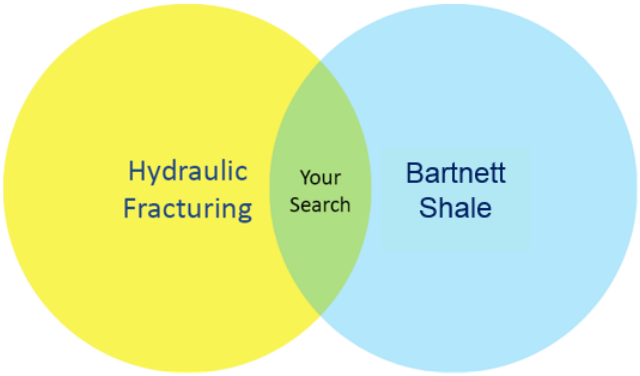


Figure 7.5.6: Venn Diagram of Emma's Search

Database searching can seem confusing at first, but the more you use databases, the easier it gets and most of the time, the results you are able to retrieve are superior to the results that you will get from a simple internet search.

Other Information Sources

After taking some time to think about her goal, which is to present a persuasive argument on why she would be a good candidate for public office, Emma decides to concentrate on obtaining relevant government information. After all, she hopes to become part of the government, so she should have some knowledge of the government's role in the fracking issue.

Government information consists of any information produced by local, state, national, or international governments and is usually available at no cost. However, sometimes it is reproduced by a commercial entity with added value. Look for websites that are created by official government entities, such as the U.S. Department of the Interior at http://www. doi.gov/index.cfm and Congress.gov, the congressional website. Texas' website can be found at https://texas.gov/. It contains information from all Texas government branches. As Emma will discover, you can usually find a wealth of reliable information in government sources.

Even though she has narrowed the scope of her search for information resources, Emma is still confronted with a myriad of information formats. With help from a reference librarian, Emma discovers a research guide on government information available in the library. She notices that there is a section for Texas that she can explore.

She breathes a sigh of relief when she finds a link to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's website, which has many documents and regulations on the topic of Hydraulic Fracturing. The reference librarian continues to assist Emma to find the most useful information as she navigates through the site. Since this information is freely available to the public, Emma is able to access the site from home and spends many hours reading the documents.

Practice Activity

The original version of this chapter contained H5P content. You may want to remove or replace this element.

This section contains material from:Bernnard, Deborah, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, and Daryl Bullis. *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, edited by Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson. Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014. http://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

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1. "Information Sources from Less In-depth to More In-depth" derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. ↵
2. "TAMU Libraries Quick Search Results" is a July 2019 screen capture of the Texas A&M University Libraries catalog search results listing at https://library.tamu.edu. ↵
3. "AND Venn Diagram" derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014),

https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. ↵

4. “OR Venn Diagram” derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User’s Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. ↵
5. “NOT Venn Diagram” derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User’s Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. ↵
6. "Venn Diagram of Emma's Search" was derived by Sarah LeMire in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User’s Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. ↵

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7.7: Gathering Your Sources

Now that you have planned your research project, you are ready to begin the research. This phase can be both exciting and challenging. As you read this section, you will learn ways to locate sources efficiently, so you will have enough time to read the sources, take notes, and think about how to use them in your research paper. In addition to finding sources, research entails determining the relevance and reliability of sources, organizing findings, as well as deciding whether and how to use sources in your paper. The technological advances of the past few decades—particularly the rise of online media—mean that, as a twenty-first-century student, you have countless sources of information available at your fingertips. But how can you tell whether a source is reliable? This section will discuss strategies for finding and evaluating sources so that you can be a media-savvy researcher.

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

- **Internet search engines** to locate sources freely available on the web.
- **A library's online catalog** to identify print books, ebooks, periodicals, DVDs, and other items in the library's collection. The catalog will help you find journals by title, but it will not list the journal's articles by title or author.
- **Online databases** to locate articles, ebooks, streaming videos, images, and other electronic resources. These databases can also help you identify articles in print periodicals.

Your instructor, as well as writing tutors and librarians, at your college can help you determine which of these methods will best fit your project and learn to use the search tools available to you. You can also find research guides and tutorials on library websites and *YouTube* channels that can help you identify appropriate research tools and learn how to use them. As you gather sources, you will need to examine them with a critical eye. Smart researchers continually ask themselves two questions: "Is this source relevant to my purpose?" and "Is this source reliable?" The first question will help you avoid wasting valuable time reading sources that stray too far from your specific topic and research questions. The second question will help you find accurate, trustworthy sources.

Writing at Work

Businesses, government organizations, and nonprofit organizations produce published materials that range from brief advertisements and brochures to lengthy, detailed reports. In many cases, producing these publications requires research. A corporation's annual report may include research about economic or industry trends. A charitable organization may use information from research in materials sent to potential donors. Regardless of the industry you work in, you may be asked to assist in developing materials for publication. Often, incorporating research in these documents can make them more effective in informing or persuading readers.

Identifying Primary and Secondary Sources

When you chose a paper topic and determined your research questions, you conducted preliminary research to stimulate your thinking. Your research plan included some general ideas for how to go about your research—for instance, interviewing an expert in the field or analyzing the content of popular magazines. You may even have identified a few potential sources. Now it is time to conduct a more focused, systematic search for informative primary and secondary sources. Writers classify research resources in two categories: primary sources and secondary sources.

Primary sources are direct, firsthand sources of information or data. For example, if you were writing a paper about the First Amendment right to freedom of speech, the text of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights would be a primary source. Other primary sources include the following:

- Data
- Works of visual art
- Literary texts
- Historical documents such as diaries or letters
- Autobiographies, interviews, or other personal accounts

Secondary sources discuss, interpret, analyze, consolidate, or otherwise rework information from primary sources. In researching a paper about the First Amendment, you might read articles about legal cases that involved First Amendment rights, or editorials expressing commentary on the First Amendment. These sources would be considered secondary sources because they are one step removed from the primary source of information. The following are examples of secondary sources:

- Literary criticism

- Biographies
- Reviews
- Documentaries
- News reports

Your topic and purpose determine whether you must cite both primary and secondary sources in your paper. Ask yourself which sources are most likely to provide the information that will answer your research questions. If you are writing a research paper about reality television shows, you will need to use some reality shows as a primary source, but secondary sources, such as a reviewer's critique, are also important. If you are writing about the health effects of nicotine, you will probably want to read the published results of scientific studies, but secondary sources, such as magazine articles discussing the outcome of a recent study, may also be helpful.

Some sources could be considered primary or secondary sources, depending on the writer's purpose for using them. For instance, if a writer's purpose is to inform readers about how the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has affected elementary education in the United States, then a *Time* magazine article on the subject would be a secondary source. However, suppose the writer's purpose is to analyze how the news media has portrayed the effects of NCLB. In that case, articles about the legislation in news magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report* would be primary sources. They provide firsthand examples of the media coverage the writer is analyzing.

Once you have thought about what kinds of sources are most likely to help you answer your research questions, you may begin your search for sources. The challenge here is to conduct your search both efficiently and thoroughly. On the one hand, effective writers use strategies to help them find the sources that are most relevant and reliable while steering clear of sources that will not be useful; on the other hand, they are open to pursuing different lines of inquiry that come up along the way than those that seemed relevant at the start of research. As a process of discovery, good research requires critical thinking about, and often revising of, writers' plans and ideas.

Reading Popular and Scholarly Periodicals

When you search for periodicals, be sure to distinguish among different types. Mass-market publications, such as newspapers and popular magazines, differ from scholarly publications in their accessibility, audience, and purpose. Newspapers and magazines are written for a broader audience than scholarly journals. Their content is usually quite accessible and easy to read. Trade magazines that target readers within a particular industry may presume the reader has background knowledge, but these publications are still reader-friendly for a broader audience. Their purpose is to inform and, often, to entertain or persuade readers as well.

Scholarly or academic journals are written for a much smaller and more expert audience. The creators of these publications are experts in the subject and assume that most of their readers are already familiar with the main topic of the journal. The target audience is also highly educated. Informing is the primary purpose of a scholarly journal. While a journal article may advance an agenda or advocate a position, the content will still be presented in an objective style and formal tone. Entertaining readers with breezy comments and splashy graphics is not a priority.

Because of these differences, scholarly journals are more challenging to read. That doesn't mean you should avoid them. On the contrary, they can provide in-depth information unavailable elsewhere. Because knowledgeable professionals carefully review the content before publication in a process called "peer-review," scholarly journals are far more reliable than much of the information available in popular media. Seek out academic journals along with other resources. Just be prepared to spend a little more time processing the information.

Writing at Work

Periodicals databases are not just for students writing research papers. They also provide a valuable service to workers in various fields. The owner of a small business might use a database such as *Business Source Premiere* to find articles on management, finance, or trends within a particular industry. Health care professionals might consult databases such as MedLine to research a particular disease or medication. Regardless of what career path you plan to pursue, periodicals databases can be a useful tool for researching specific topics and identifying periodicals that will help you keep up with the latest news in your industry.

Using Sources from the Open Web

When faced with the challenge of writing a research paper, some students rely on popular search engines, such as Google, as their only source of information. Typing a keyword or phrase into a search engine instantly pulls up links to dozens, hundreds, or even

thousands of related websites—what could be easier? While the Web is useful for retrieving information, you should be wary of limiting your research to sources from the open Web.

For example, **wikis**, including online encyclopedias, such as *Wikipedia*, and community-driven question-and-answer sites, such *Yahoo Answers*, are very easy to access on the Web. They are free, and they appear among the first few results when using a search engine. Because these sites are created and revised by a large community of users, they cover thousands of topics, and many are written in an informal and straightforward writing style. However, these sites may not have a reliable control system for researching, writing, and reviewing posts. While wikis may be a good starting point for finding other, more trustworthy, more fully developed sources, usually they should not be your final sources.

Despite its apparent convenience, researching on the open Web has the following drawbacks to consider:

- Results do not consider the reliability of the sources. The first few hits that appear in search results often include sites whose content is not always reliable. Search engines cannot tell you which sites have accurate information.
- Results may be influenced by popularity or advertisers. Search engines find websites that people visit often and list the results in order of popularity rather than relevance to your topic.
- Results may be too numerous for you to use. Search engines often return an overwhelming number of results. Because it is difficult to filter results for quality or relevance, the most useful sites may be buried deep within your search results. It is not realistic for you to examine every site.
- Results do not include many of the library's high quality electronic resources that are only available through password-protected databases or on campus.
- Because anyone can publish anything on the Web, the quality of the information varies greatly and you will need to evaluate web resources carefully.

Nevertheless, a search on the open Web can provide a helpful overview of a topic and may pull up genuinely useful sources. You may find specialized search engines recommended on your college library's website. For example, http://www.usa.gov will search for information on United States government websites. If you are working at your personal computer, use the Bookmarks or Favorites feature of your web browser to save and organize sites that look promising.

To get the most out of a search engine, use strategies to make your search more efficient. Depending on the specific search engine you use, the following options may be available:

- Limit results to websites that have been updated within a particular time frame.
- Limit results by language or region.
- Limit results to scholarly works available online. Google Scholar is an example.
- Limit results by file type.
- Limit results to a particular site or domain type, such as .edu (school and university sites) or .gov (government sites). This is a quick way to filter out commercial sites that often lead to less objective results.

Types and Formats of Library Sources

Information accessible through a college library comes in a variety of types and formats of sources. Books, DVDS, and various types of periodicals can be found in physical form at the library. Many of these same materials are available in electronic format in the form of ebooks, electronic journal articles, and streaming videos. Your college library may have some resources in both print and electronic formats while others may be available exclusively in one format. The following lists different types of resources available at college libraries. In addition to the resources noted, library holdings may include primary sources such as historical documents, letters, diaries, and images.

Types of sources

- **Reference works** provide a summary of information about a particular topic. Almanacs, encyclopedias, atlases, medical reference books, and scientific abstracts are examples of reference works. In most cases, reference books may not be checked out of a library. Note that reference works are many steps removed from original primary sources and are often brief, so these should be used only as a starting point when you gather information.
  - **Examples**: *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2010*; *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, published by the American Psychiatric Association.
- **Nonfiction books** provide in-depth coverage of a topic. Trade books, biographies, and how-to guides are usually written for a general audience. Scholarly books and scientific studies are usually written for an audience that has specialized knowledge of a

topic.

  - **Examples**: *The Low-Carb Solution: A Slimmer You in 30 Days; Carbohydrates, Fats and Proteins: Exploring the Relationship Between Macronutrient Ratios and Health Outcomes.*

- **Periodicals** are published at regular intervals—daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Newspapers, magazines, and academic journals are different kinds of periodicals. Some periodicals provide articles on subjects of general interest while others are more specialized.
  - **Examples**: *The New York Times; PC Magazine; JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association.*
- **Government publications** by federal, state, and local agencies publish information on a variety of topics. Government publications include reports, legislation, court documents, public records, statistics, studies, guides, programs, and forms.
  - **Examples**: *The Census 2000 Profile; The Business Relocation Package*, published by the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.
- **Business publications** and publications by nonprofit organizations are designed to market a product, provide background about the organization, provide information on topics connected to the organization, or promote a cause. These publications include reports, newsletters, advertisements, manuals, brochures, and other print documents.
  - **Examples**: a company's instruction manual explaining how to use a specific software program; a news release published by the Sierra Club.
- **Documentaries** are the moving-image equivalent of nonfiction books. They cover a range of topics and can be introductory or scholarly. Newsreels can be primary sources about then-current events. Feature-length programs or episodes of a series can be secondary sources about historical phenomena or life stories. You may view a documentary in a movie theater, on television, on an open website, or in a subscription-accessed database such as Films on Demand.
  - **Examples**: *Freedom Riders*, directed by Stanley Nelson; *Finding Your Roots*, with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

As you gather information, strive for a balance of accessible, easy-to-read sources and more specialized, challenging sources. Relying solely on lightweight books and articles written for a general audience will drastically limit the range of useful, substantial information. However, restricting oneself to dense, scholarly works could make the research process overwhelming. An effective strategy for unfamiliar topics is to begin your reading with works written for the general public, and then move to more scholarly works as you learn more about your topic.

Using Databases

While library catalogs can help you locate print and electronic book-length sources, as well as some types of non-print holdings, such as CDs, DVDs, and audiobooks, the best way to locate shorter sources, such as articles in magazines, newspapers, and journals, is to search online databases accessible through a portal to which your college's library subscribes. In many cases, the full texts of articles are available from these databases. In other instances, articles are indexed, meaning there is a summary and publication information about the article, but the full text is not immediately available in the database; instead, you may find the indexed article in a print periodical in your college's library holdings, or you can submit an online request for an interlibrary loan, and a librarian will email a digitized copy of the article to you.

When searching for sources using a password-protected portal, it's important to understand where and how to look up your topic. If you don't find useful sources using the portal's general search bar, then you may retrieve better results by going to specific databases within the portal. You can choose specific databases by going to "Databases A-Z" or "Databases by Subject." Databases may be general, including many types of resources on a broad range of subjects, or they may be specialized, focusing on a particular format of resource or a specific subject area. The following list describes some commonly used indexes and databases accessible through libraries' research portals.

- **Academic Search Complete** includes articles on a wide variety of topics published in various forums, both scholarly and popular.
- **Opposing Viewpoints** includes articles, statistics, and recommended websites related to a wide range of controversial issues.
- **CQ Researcher Online** has full-text articles about issues in the news.
- **Lexis Nexis** has articles from newspapers and other periodicals, news transcripts, and business and legal information.
- **Business Source Complete** comprises business-related content from magazines, journals, and trade publications.
- **Films on Demand** has streaming video of documentaries and historic newsreels.

- **Artstor** has high-quality images of works of visual art of various media, as well as information on the creators, subjects, materials, and holdings of artworks.
- **JSTOR** includes full-text scholarly secondary sources, including books and articles, as well as primary sources on a wide variety of topics, mostly in the humanities and social sciences.
- **History Reference Center** has full-text articles from reference books, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals, as well as images and streaming videos on most of the world's cultures and time periods.
- **Literature Resource Center** includes full-text print and electronic sources relevant to literature, such as biographies of authors, reviews of works, overviews of plots and characters, analyses of themes, and scholarly criticism.
- **Science and Technology Collection** has full-text articles from journals in various scientific and technical fields.
- **MEDLINE, Proquest Nursing**, and **Consumer Health Source** contain articles in medicine and health.

Sometimes you will know exactly which source you are looking for, for example, if your instructor or another writer references that source. Having the author (if available), title, and other information about the source included in an end-of-text citation will help you to find that source.

As you go through the process of gathering sources, you will likely need to find specific sources referenced by others to build your list of useful sources; use the steps above to help you do this. However, keep in mind that, especially when you first start researching, you will also need to find sources about your topic having little or no idea what sources are out there. Therefore, rather than authors and titles, you will need to enter keywords, or subject search terms, related to your topic. The next section instructs you on how to do that.

Entering Search Terms

One of the most important steps in conducting research is to "learn how to speak database." To find reliable sources efficiently, you must identify single words or phrases that represent the major concepts of your research—that is, your keywords, or subject search terms. Your starting points for developing search terms are the topic and the research questions you identify, but you should also think of synonyms for those terms. Furthermore, as you begin searching for sources, you should notice additional terms in the subjects listed in the records of your results. These subjects will help you find additional sources.

As Jorge used his library's catalog and databases, he worked to refine his search by making note of subjects associated with sources about low-carb dieting. His search helped him to identify the following additional terms and related topics to research:

- Low-carbohydrate diet
- Insulin resistance reducing diets
- Glycemic index
- Dietary carbohydrates

Searching the library's online resources is similar in many ways to searching the Internet, except some library catalogs and databases require specific search techniques. For example, some databases require that you use **Boolean operators** to connect your search terms. In other databases, Boolean operators are optional, but can still help you get better search results. Here are some of the ways you can use Boolean operators:

- **Connect keywords with AND** to limit results to citations that include both keywords—for example, carbohydrates AND diet.
- **Connect keywords with OR** to search for results that contain either of two terms. For example, searching for diet OR nutrition locates articles that use "diet" as a keyword as well as articles that use "nutrition" as a keyword.
- **Connect keywords with NOT** to search for the first word without the second. This can help you eliminate irrelevant results based on words that are similar to your search term. For example, searching for obesity NOT childhood locates materials on obesity but excludes materials on childhood obesity.
- **Enclose a phrase in quotation marks** to search for an exact phrase, such as "morbid obesity."

Many databases offer tools for improving your search. Make your search in library catalogs and databases more effective by using the following tips:

- **Use limiters** (often located on the left side of the search results) to further refine your results after searching.
- **Change the sort of your results** so the order of the articles best fits your needs. Sorting by date allows you to put the most recent or the oldest articles at the top of the results list. Other types of sorts include relevance, alphabetical by author's name or alphabetical by article title.

- **Use the Advanced Search** functions of your database to further refine your results or to create more complex combinations of search terms.
- **Use the Help section of the database** to find more search strategies that apply to that particular database.

Here is an example of using Boolean operators in an Advanced Search:



Figure 7.5.1

Consulting a Reference Librarian

Sifting through library stacks and database search results to find the information you need can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Knowing the right keywords can sometimes make all the difference in conducting a successful search. If you are not sure how you should begin your search, or if your search is yielding too many, or too few, results, then you are not alone. Many students find this process challenging, although it does get easier with experience. One way to learn better search strategies is to consult a reference librarian and watch online tutorials that research experts have created to help you. If you have trouble finding sources on a topic, consult a librarian.

Reference librarians are intimately familiar with the systems that libraries use to organize and classify information. They can help you locate a particular book in the library stacks, steer you toward useful reference works, and provide tips on how to use databases and other electronic research tools. Take the time to see what resources you can find on your own, but if you encounter difficulties, ask for help. Many academic librarians are available for online chatting, texting, and emailing as well as face-to-face reference consultations. To make the most of your reference consultation, be prepared to explain, to the librarian, the assignment and your timeline as well as your research questions and ideas for keywords. Because they are familiar with the resources available, librarians may be able to recommend specific resources that fit your needs and tailor your keywords to the search tools you are using.

? Exercise 9

At the Library of Congress's website, search for results on a few terms related to your topic. Review your search results to identify six to eight additional terms you might use when you search for sources using your college library's catalog and databases.

? Exercise 10

Visit your library's website or consult with a reference librarian to determine which databases would be useful for your research. Depending on your topic, you may rely on a general database, a specialized database for a particular subject area, or both. Identify at least two relevant databases. Conduct a keyword search in these databases to find potentially relevant sources on your topic. Also, search your college's online library catalog. If the catalog or database you are using provides abstracts of sources, then read them to determine how useful the sources are likely to be. Print out, email to yourself, or save your search results.

? Exercise 11

In your list of results, identify three to five sources to review more closely. If the full text is available online, set aside time to open, save, and read it. If not, use the "Find It" tool to see if the source is available through your college's library. Visit the library to locate any sources you need that are only available in print. If the source is not available directly through your school's library, then use the library's online tool to request an interlibrary loan of the source: librarians will send the source in digital form to your email address for you to open and save, or they will send it in print form to your campus library for you to check out.

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7.8: Using the Right Sources for Your Project

Selecting the right type of source for your information needs is an important aspect of researched writing. The right source can provide evidence and add credibility to your position, but the wrong source can undermine your position. The context of your project is key to choosing the right source; even a completely specious source can be the right source if it's evidence in support of a paper about specious sources. For most of your projects though, you'll likely be looking for high-quality sources, especially scholarly sources.

Types of Evidence in Academic Arguments

All academic writers use evidence to support their claims. However, as writing tasks vary across disciplinary fields, different types of evidence are required. Often a combination of different types of evidence is required in order to adequately support and develop a point.

To clarify, evidence is what a writer uses to support or defend his or her argument, and only valid and credible evidence is enough to make an argument strong.

Evidence is not simply "facts." Evidence is not simply "quotes."

As you develop your research-supported essay, consider not only what types of evidence might support your ideas but also what types of evidence will be considered valid or credible according to the academic discipline or academic audience for which you are writing. The following are some examples of credible evidence by academic discipline:

Evidence in the Humanities: Literature, Art, Film, Music, Philosophy

- Scholarly essays that analyze original works;
- Details from an image, a film, or other work of art;
- Passages from a musical composition;
- Passages of text, including poetry.

Evidence in the Humanities: History

- Primary sources (photos, letters, maps, official documents, etc.);
- Other books or articles that interpret primary sources or other evidence.

Evidence in the Social Sciences: Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology

- Books or articles that interpret data and results from other people's original experiments or studies;
- Results from one's own field research (including interviews, surveys, observations, etc.);
- Data from one's own experiments;
- Statistics derived from large studies.

Evidence in the Sciences: Biology, Chemistry, Physics

- Data from the author of the paper's own experiments;
- Books or articles that interpret data and results from other people's original experiments or studies.

What remains consistent no matter the discipline in which you are writing, however, is that evidence NEVER speaks for itself. Quality evidence must be integrated into your own argument or claim in order to demonstrate that the evidence supports your thesis. In addition, be alert to evidence that seems to contradict your claims or offers a counterargument to it. Rebutting that counter argument can be powerful evidence for your claim. You can also make evidence that isn't *there* an integral part of your argument, too. If you can't find the evidence you think you need, ask yourself why it seems to be lacking, or if its absence adds a new dimension to your thinking about the topic. Remember, *evidence* is not the piling up of facts or quotes. Evidence is only one component of a strong, well supported, well argued, and well written composition.

Scholarly Sources

While reading academic/scholarly journal articles can be one of the more intimidating aspects of college-level research projects, there are several aspects to the purpose, format, and style of scholarly/academic journal articles that are rather straightforward and patterned. Knowing the template that scholarly articles follow can enhance your reading and comprehension experience and make

these intimidating reading materials much less daunting. Moreover, understanding the purpose of scholarly publication can help you to understand what matters most in these articles.

The term *scholarly* is one that can be quite confusing. Some professors will use it broadly to mean any source that is reputable and academic in nature, while other professors will use it more narrowly to refer specifically to sources that have gone through a peer review process. Generally speaking, sources may fall on a spectrum between popular and scholarly, with peer-reviewed research articles and monographs fitting most clearly under the scholarly category. Always check with your professor to be sure how they are defining scholarly sources for the purposes of your class.

Basic Format

Information in academic journal articles is presented in a formal, highly prescribed format, meaning that scholarly articles tend to follow a similar layout, pattern, and style. The pages often look stark, with little decoration or imagery. We see few photos in scholarly articles. The article title is often fairly prominent on the first page, as are the author(s)' name(s). Sometimes there is a bit of information about each author, such as the name of his or her current academic institution or academic credentials. At either the top or bottom of the first few pages, you can find the name of the scholarly journal in which the article is published.

Abstract

On the first page of the article, you will often find an abstract, which is a summary of the author's research question, methods and results. While this abstract is useful to you as a reader because it gives you some background about the article before you begin reading, you should not cite this abstract in your paper. Please read these abstracts as you are initially seeking sources so that you can determine whether or not reading the article will be useful to you, but do not quote or paraphrase from the abstract.

Works Cited

At the end of academic articles, you will find a list of Works Cited (sometimes called a List of References). This is generally quite long, and it details all of the work that the author considered or cited in designing his or her own research project or in writing the article. Helpful hint: reading the Works Cited in an article that you find to be particularly illuminating or useful can be a great way to locate other sources that may be useful for your own research project. If you see a title that looks interesting, see if you can access it via your university's library.

Literature Review

Scholarly sources often contain Literature Reviews in the beginning section of the article. They are generally several paragraphs or pages long. Some articles are *only* Literature Reviews. These Literature Reviews generally do not constitute an author's own work. Instead, they are summaries and syntheses of other scholars' work that has previously been published on the topic that the author is addressing in his or her paper. Including this review of previous research helps the author to communicate his or her understanding of the context out of which his or her research comes.

Like the abstract, the Literature Review is another part of a scholarly article from which you should generally not quote. Often, students will mistakenly try to cite information that they find in this Literature Review section of scholarly articles. But that is sort of like citing a SparkNotes version of an essay that you have not read. The Literature Review is where your author, in his or her own words, describes previous research. He or she is outlining what others have said in their own articles, not offering his or her own new insight (and what we are interested in in scholarly articles is the new information that a researcher brings to the topic). If you find that there is interesting information from the sources that your author discusses in the Literature Review, then you should locate the article(s) that the author is summarizing and read them for yourself. That, in fact, is a great strategy for finding more sources.

The "Research Gap"

Somewhere near the end of the Literature Review, authors may indicate what has not been said or not been examined by previous scholars. This has been called a "research gap" – a space out of which a scholar's own research develops. The "research gap" opens the opportunity for the author to assert his or her own research question or claim. Academic authors who want to publish in scholarly research journals need to define a research gap and then attempt to fill that gap because scholarly journals want to publish new, innovative and interesting work that will push knowledge and scholarship in that field forward. Scholars must communicate what new ideas they have worked on: what is their new hypothesis, or experiment, or interpretation or analysis.

The Scholar(s) Add Their New Perspective

Then, and sometimes for the bulk of an academic article, the author discusses their original work and analysis. This is the part of the article where the author(s) add to the conversation, where they try to fill in the research gap that they identified. This is also the part of the article that is the primary research. The author(s) may include a discussion of their research methodology and results, or an elaboration and defense of their reasoning, interpretation or analysis. Scholarly articles in the sciences or social sciences may include headings such as "Methods," "Results," and "Discussion" or synonyms of those words in this part of the article. In arts or humanities journal articles, these headings may not appear because scholars in the arts and humanities do not necessarily perform lab-based research in the same way as scientists or social scientists do. Authors may reference others' research even in this section of original work and analysis, but only to support or enhance the discussion of the scholar's own discussion. This is the part of the scholarly article that you should cite from, as it indicates the work your author or authors have done.

Conclusion

To conclude a scholarly journal article, authors may reference their original research question or hypothesis once more. They may summarize some of the points made in the article. We often see scholars concluding by indicating how, why, or to whom their research matters. Sometimes, authors will conclude by looking forward, offering ideas for other scholars to engage in future research. Sometimes, they may reflect on why an experiment failed (if it did) and how to approach that experiment differently next time. What we do not tend to see is scholars merely summarizing everything they discussed in the essay, point by point. Instead, they want to leave readers with a sense of why the work that they have discussed in their article matters.

As you read scholarly sources, remember:

- To look for the author's research question or hypothesis;
- To seek out the "research gap": why did the author have this research question or hypothesis?
- To identify the Literature Review;
- To identify the point at which the author stops discussing previous research and begins to discuss his or her own;
- Most importantly: remember to always try to understand what new information this article brings to the scholarly "conversation" about this topic?

Types of Sources: Primary, Secondary, Tertiary

The determination of a text as "popular" or "scholarly/academic" is one way to classify it and to understand what type of information you are engaging with. Another way to classify sources is by considering whether they are primary, secondary or tertiary. Popular sources can be primary, secondary, or tertiary. Scholarly sources, also, can be primary, secondary, or tertiary.

What is a Primary Source?

Primary sources are texts that arise directly from a particular event or time period. They may be letters, speeches, works of art, works of literature, diaries, direct personal observations, newspaper articles that offer direct observations of current events, survey responses, tweets, other social media posts, original scholarly research (meaning research that the author or authors conduct themselves) or any other content that comes out of direct involvement with an event or a research study.

Primary research is information that has not yet been critiqued, interpreted or analyzed by a second (or third, etc.) party.

Primary sources can be popular (if published in newspapers, magazines or websites for the general public) or academic (if written by scholars and published in scholarly journals).

Examples of primary sources:

- Journals, diaries
- Blog posts
- A speech
- Data from surveys or polls
- Scholarly journal articles in which the author(s) discuss the methods and results from their own original research/experiments
- Photos, videos, sound recordings
- Interviews or transcripts
- Poems, paintings, sculptures, songs or other works of art

- Government documents (such as reports of legislative sessions, laws or court decisions, financial or economic reports, and more)

What is a Secondary Source?

Secondary sources summarize, interpret, critique, analyze, or offer commentary on primary sources.

In a secondary source, an author's subject is not necessarily something that he or she directly experienced. The author of a secondary source may be summarizing, interpreting or analyzing data or information from someone else's research or offering an interpretation or opinion on current events. Thus, the secondary source is one step away from that original, primary topic/subject/research study.

Secondary sources can be popular (if published in newspapers, magazines or websites for the general public) or academic (if written by scholars and published in scholarly journals).

Examples of secondary sources:

- Book, movie or art reviews
- Summaries of the findings from other people's research
- Interpretations or analyses of primary source materials or other people's research
- Histories or biographies
- Political commentary

What is a Tertiary Source?

Tertiary sources are syntheses of primary and secondary sources. The person/people who compose a tertiary text are summarizing, compiling, and/or paraphrasing others' work. These sources sometimes do not list an author.

Tertiary sources can be popular or academic.

Examples of tertiary sources include:

- Encyclopedias
- Fact books
- Dictionaries
- Guides
- Handbooks
- Wikipedia

Thinking about Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Sources and your Research Strategy

- What kinds of primary sources would be useful for your research project? Why? Where will you find them? Are you more interested in popular primary sources or scholarly primary sources — and why?
- What kinds of secondary sources could be useful for your project – and why? Are you more interested in popular secondary sources or scholarly secondary sources – and why?
- What kinds of tertiary sources might you try to access? In what ways would this tertiary source help you in your research?

Practice Activity

The original version of this chapter contained H5P content. You may want to remove or replace this element.

This section contains material from:

Jeffrey, Robin, and Yvonne Bruce. "Types of Evidence in Academic Arguments." In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/types-of-evidence-in-academic-arguments/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Zickel, Emilie. "A Deeper Look at Scholarly Sources." In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019.

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"Types of Primary Sources: Primary, Secondary, Tertiary." In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/types-of-sources-primary-secondary-tertiary/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

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7.9: 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

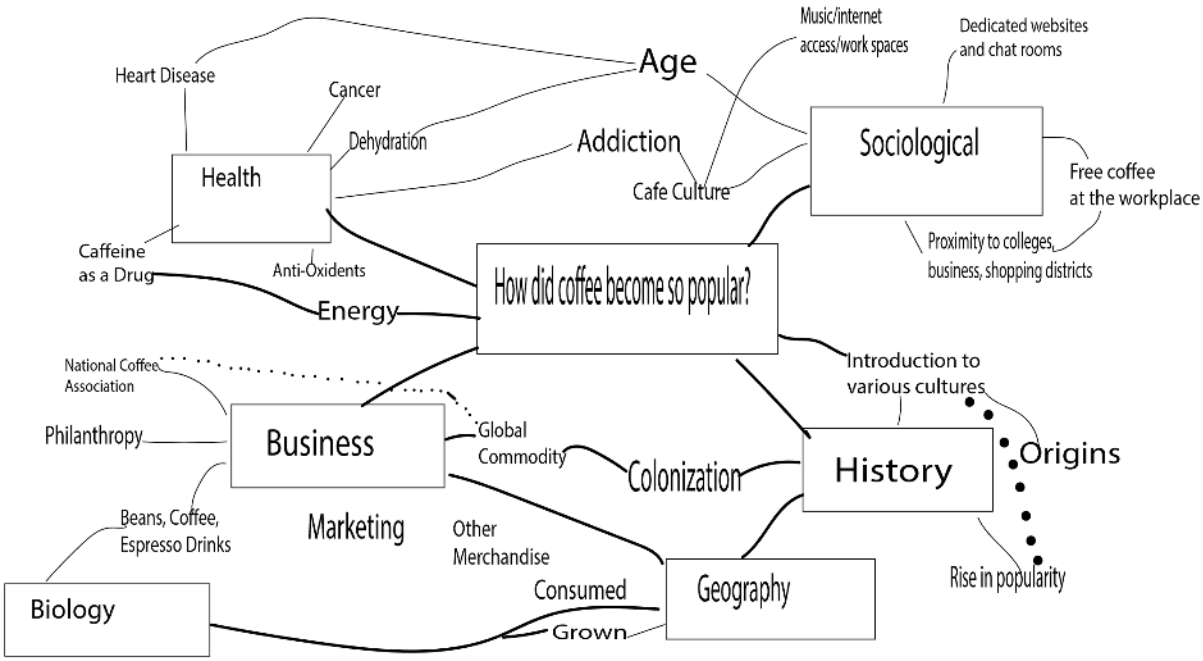


Figure: created by authors.

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?

Figure:

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.

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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Last update: June 6, 2020.

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7.10: Evaluating and Processing Your Sources

Determining Whether a Source Is Relevant

At this point in your research process, you may have identified dozens of potential sources. It is easy for writers to get so caught up in checking out books and printing out articles that they forget to ask themselves how they will use these resources in their research. Now is a good time to get a little ruthless. Reading and taking notes takes time and energy, so you will want to focus on the most relevant sources.

You may benefit from seeking out sources that are current, or up to date. Depending on your topic, sources may become outdated relatively soon after publication, or they may remain useful for years. For instance, online social networking sites have evolved rapidly over the past few years. An article published in 2002 about this topic will not provide current information. On the other hand, a research paper on elementary education practices might refer to studies published decades ago by influential child psychologists. When using websites for research, look on the webpage to see when the site was last updated. Many non-functioning links are a sign that a website is not regularly updated. Do not be afraid to ask your instructor, tutors, and librarians for suggestions if you find that many of your most relevant sources are not especially reliable, or that your most reliable sources are not relevant.

To weed through your collection of books and articles, skim their contents. Read quickly with your research questions and subtopics in mind. The following tips explain how to skim to get a quick sense of what topics are covered. If a book or article is not especially relevant, put it aside. You can always come back to it later if you need to.

Tips for Skimming Books

1. Read the book cover and table of contents for a broad overview of the topics covered.
2. Use the index to locate more specific topics and see how thoroughly they are covered.
3. Flip through the book and look for subtitles or key terms that correspond to your research.

Tips for Skimming Articles

1. Journal articles often begin with an abstract or summary of the contents. Read it to determine the article's relevance to your research.
2. Skim the introduction and conclusion for summary material.
3. Skim through subheadings and text features such as sidebars.
4. Look for keywords related to your topic.

Determining Whether a Source Is Reliable

All information sources are not created equal. Sources can vary greatly in terms of how carefully they are researched, written, edited, and reviewed for accuracy. Common sense will help you identify obviously questionable sources, such as tabloids that feature tales of alien abductions, or personal websites with glaring typos. Sometimes, however, a source's reliability—or lack of it—is not so obvious. To evaluate your research sources, you will use critical thinking skills consciously and deliberately.

Sources you encounter will be written for distinct purposes and with particular audiences in mind, which may account for differences such as the following:

- How thoroughly writers cover a given topic
- How carefully writers research and document facts
- How editors review the work
- What biases or agendas affect the content

A journal article written for an academic audience for the purpose of expanding scholarship in a given field will take an approach quite different from a magazine feature written to inform a general audience. Textbooks, hard news articles, and websites approach a subject from different angles as well. To some extent, the type of source provides clues about its overall depth and reliability. Use the following descriptions of types of sources to help you determine the quality of your sources.

- **High Quality Sources** provide the most in-depth information. They are written and reviewed by subject-matter experts. Examples: books published by University presses and articles in scholarly journals, such as *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*; trade books and magazines geared toward an educated general audience, such as *Smithsonian Magazine*; government documents; documents by reputable organizations, such as universities and research institutes.

- **Varied Quality Sources** are often useful; however, they do not cover subjects in as much depth as high-quality sources, and they are not always rigorously researched and reviewed. Some, such as popular magazine articles or company brochures, may be written to market a product or a cause. Textbooks and reference books are usually reliable, but they may not cover a topic in great depth. Use them with caution. Examples: news stories and feature articles (print or online) from reputable newspapers, magazines, or organizations, such as *The New York Times* or the *Public Broadcasting Service*; popular magazine articles, which may or may not be carefully researched and fact checked; documents by businesses and nonprofit organizations.
- **Questionable Sources** are often written primarily to attract a large readership or to present the author's opinions, and they are not subject to careful review. Generally, avoid using these as final sources. If you want to use a source that fits into this category, then carefully evaluate it using criteria below. Examples: loosely regulated or unregulated media content, such as Internet discussion boards, blogs, free online encyclopedias, talk shows, television news shows with obvious political biases, personal websites, and chat rooms.

Even when you are using a type of source that is generally reliable, you will still need to evaluate the author's credibility and the publication itself on an individual basis. To examine the author's credibility—that is, how much you can believe of what the author has to say—examine his or her credentials. What career experience or academic study shows that the author has the expertise to write about this topic? Keep in mind that expertise in one field is no guarantee of expertise in another, unrelated area. For instance, an author may have an advanced degree in physiology, but this credential is not a valid qualification for writing about psychology. Check credentials carefully.

Just as important as the author's credibility is the publication's overall reputability. Reputability refers to a source's standing and reputation as a respectable, reliable source of information. An established and well-known newspaper, such as *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*, is more reputable than a college newspaper put out by comparatively inexperienced students. A website that is maintained by a well-known, respected organization and regularly updated is more reputable than one created by an unknown author or group.

Whenever you consult a source, always think carefully about the author's or authors' purpose in presenting the information. Few sources present facts completely objectively. In some cases, the source's content and tone are significantly influenced by biases or hidden agendas. Bias refers to favoritism or prejudice toward a particular person or group. For instance, an author may be biased against a certain political party and present information in a way that subtly—or not so subtly—makes that organization look bad. Bias can lead an author to present facts selectively, edit quotations to misrepresent someone's words, and distort information. Hidden agendas are goals that are not immediately obvious but influence how an author presents the facts. For instance, an article about the role of beef in a healthy diet would be questionable if it were written by a representative of the beef industry—or by the president of an animalrights organization. In both cases, the author would likely have a hidden agenda.

As Jorge conducted his research, he read several research studies in which scientists found significant benefits to following a low-carbohydrate diet. He also noticed that many studies were sponsored by a foundation associated with the author of a popular series of low-carbohydrate diet books. Jorge read these studies with a critical eye, knowing that a hidden agenda might be shaping the researchers' conclusions.

In sum, to evaluate a source, you should consider not only how current the source is but also criteria such as the type of source, its intended purpose and audience, the author's (or authors') qualifications, the publication's reputation, any indications of bias or hidden agendas, and the overall professionalism of the source's language, ideas, and design. You should consider these criteria as well as your overall impressions of sources' quality. Read carefully, and notice how well authors present and support their statements. Stay actively engaged—do not simply accept sources' words as truth.

Writing at Work

The critical thinking skills you use to evaluate research sources as a student are equally valuable when you conduct research on the job. If you follow certain periodicals or websites, you have probably identified publications that consistently provide reliable information. Reading blogs and online discussion groups is a great way to identify new trends and hot topics in a particular field, but these sources should not be your final sources if you're doing substantial research.

? Exercise 12

Choose a source you found that you think is relevant but you're unsure if it's reliable. Answer the following questions about the source:

a. Can you establish that the author is credible and the publication is reputable?

b. Does the author support ideas with specific facts and details that are carefully documented? Is the source of the author's information clear? When you use secondary sources, look for sources that are not too removed from primary research.
c. Does the author leave out any information that you would expect to see in a discussion of this topic?
d. Does the source include any factual errors or instances of faulty logic?
e. Do the author's conclusions logically follow from the evidence that is presented? Can you see how the author gets to one point from another?
f. Is the writing clear and free from errors, clichés, and empty buzzwords?
g. Is the tone objective, balanced, and reasonable? Does the source convey any biases? Be on the lookout for extreme, emotionally-charged language.
h. Based on what you know about the author, is he or she likely to have any hidden agendas?
i. Is the source's design professional? Are graphics informative, useful, and easy to understand? If the source is a website, is it well-organized, easy to navigate, and free of clutter like flashing ads and unnecessary sound effects?
j. Is the source contradicted by information you found in other sources? If so, it is possible that your sources are presenting similar information but taking different perspectives, which requires you to think carefully about which sources you find more convincing and why. Be suspicious, however, of any source that presents facts you cannot confirm elsewhere.

Keeping Track of Sources

As you determine which sources you will rely on most, it is important to establish a system for keeping track of your sources and taking notes. There are several ways to go about it, and no one system is necessarily superior. Here's what matters: you keep materials in order; record bibliographical information you will need later; and take detailed, organized notes.

Think ahead to a moment a few weeks from now, when you've written your research paper and are almost ready to submit it for a grade. There is just one task left—writing your list of sources. As you begin typing your list, you realize you need to include the publication information for a book you cited frequently. Unfortunately, you already returned it to the library several days ago. You do not remember the URLs for some of the websites you used or the dates you accessed them—information that also must be included in your bibliography. With a sinking feeling, you realize that finding this information and preparing your bibliography will require hours of work.

This stressful scenario can be avoided. Taking time to organize source information now will ensure that you are not scrambling to find it at the last minute. Throughout your research, record bibliographical information for each source as soon as you begin using it. You may use pen-and-paper methods, such as a notebook or note cards, or maintain an electronic list. (If you prefer the latter option, many office software packages include separate programs for recording bibliographic information.) The following table shows the specific details you should record for commonly used source types. Use these details to develop a working bibliography—a preliminary list of sources that you will later use to develop the references section of your paper. It will save you time later on to record, from the start, all information you will need about your sources to create a Works Cited page. The following lists what you should record for some common types of sources. Your research may involve other types of sources not listed below. **For more information on formatting citations**, consult the APA website at http://www.apa.org or the APA Guide or MLA Guide on the Purdue University Online Writing Lab website at http://owl.english.purdue.edu.

- **Book**: the author(s), title, subtitle, publisher, city of publication, and year of publication.
- **Work** (e.g., article) in an anthology (i.e., book): the work's author(s), title, and subtitle; the book's title, subtitle, editor(s); any edition and volume numbers of the book; the book's publisher, city of publication, and year of publication; the pages on which the work appears in the book.
- **Periodical**: the author(s), title of the article, title of the publication, date of publication, volume and issue number, and range of page numbers of the article.
- **Online source**: the author(s); the title of the work or web page; the title of the website; the organization that sponsors the website; the database name; the date of publication or date of last update; the date you accessed the source.
- **Interview**: the name of the person interviewed; the method of communication (e.g., in-person, video chat, email, or phone call); the date of the interview.

As you conduct research, you may wish to record additional details, such as a book's call number, the contact information for a person you interviewed, or the URL of an online source. That will make it easier for you to quickly locate the source again. You may also wish to assign each source a code (e.g., a number, letter, symbol, or color) to use when taking notes.

Taking Notes Efficiently

Writers sometimes get caught up in taking extensive notes, so much so that they lose sight of how their sources help them to answer their research questions. The challenge is to stay focused and organized as you gather information from sources. Before you begin taking notes, take a moment to step back and remind yourself of your goal as a researcher: to find information that will help you answer your research questions. That goal will determine what information you record and how you organize it. When you write your paper, you will present your conclusions about the topic supported by research. Therefore, you do not need to write down every detail of your sources; some of the information in relevant sources will be irrelevant to your research questions.

There are several formats you can use to take notes. No technique is necessarily better than the others—it is more important to choose a format you are comfortable using. Choose a note-taking method from among those listed below that works best for you, and use it as you gather sources. Using the techniques discussed in this section will prepare you for the next step in writing your research paper: organizing and synthesizing the information you find.

Use index cards. This traditional format involves writing each note on a separate index card. It takes more time than copying and pasting into an electronic document, which encourages you to be selective in choosing which ideas to record. Recording notes on separate cards makes it easy to later organize your notes according to major topics. Some writers color-code their cards to make them still more organized.

Maintain a research notebook. Instead of using index cards or electronic note cards, you may wish to keep a notebook or electronic folder, allotting a few pages (or one file) for each of your sources. This method makes it easy to create a separate column or section of the document where you add your responses to the information you encounter in your research.

Annotate your sources. This method involves making handwritten notes in the margins of sources that you have printed or photocopied. If using electronic sources, you can make comments within the source document. For example, you might add comment boxes to a PDF version of an article. This method works best for experienced researchers who have already thought a great deal about the topic because it can be difficult to organize your notes later when starting your draft.

Use note-taking software. There are many options for taking and organizing notes electronically. These include word-processing software that you can use offline on a computer. They also include tools like Diigo, Evernote, and Mindomo, available on the Web for free or reduced prices if you will use the tool for educational purposes. Although you may need to set aside time to learn how to use them, digital tools offer you possibilities that handwritten note cards do not, such as searching your notes, copying and pasting your notes into your paper, and saving and sharing your notes online.

Whether you use old-fashioned index cards or organize your notes digitally, you should keep all your notes in one place, and use topic headings to group related details. Doing so will help you identify connections among different sources. It will also help you make connections between your notes and the research questions and subtopics you identified earlier. Throughout the process of taking notes, be scrupulous about making sure you have correctly attributed each idea or piece of information to its source. Always include source information or use a code system (e.g., numbers, letters, symbols, or colors) so you know exactly which claims or evidence came from which sources.

Effective researchers make choices about which types of notes are most appropriate for their purpose. Your notes may fall into three categories:

Summary notes sum up the main ideas in a source in a few sentences or a short paragraph. A summary is considerably shorter than the original text and captures only the major ideas. Use summary notes when you do not need to record specific details but you intend to refer to broad concepts the author discusses.

Paraphrased notes restate a fact or idea from a source using your own words and sentence structure.

Direct quotations use the exact wording used by the original source and enclose the quoted material in quotation marks. It is a good strategy to copy direct quotations when an author expresses an idea in an especially lively or memorable way. However, do not rely exclusively on direct quotations in your note taking.

Summarizing and **paraphrasing** as you take notes is usually a better strategy than copying direct quotations because it forces you to think through the claims and evidence in your source and to understand it well enough to restate it. In short, these methods of note-taking help you to stay engaged with your topic instead of simply copying and pasting text from sources. Using them will help you when you draft your paper.

Paraphrase ideas carefully, and check your paraphrased notes against the original text to make sure you have restated the author's ideas accurately.

Use quotation marks to set off any words for phrases taken directly from the source. With direct quotations, again, make sure your notes accurately reflect the content of the original text: check that quoted material is copied verbatim. If you omit words from a quotation, use ellipses to show the omission, and make sure the omission does not change the author's meaning. If you add your own responses and ideas to your notes, mark them as such so that your own thinking about the topic stands out from ideas you summarized or paraphrased.

? Exercise 13

Review your research, then set a timer for ten minutes and freewrite about your topic, using your questions and thesis to guide your writing. Complete this exercise without looking over your notes or sources. Base your writing on the overall impressions and concepts you have absorbed while conducting research. If additional, related questions come to mind, jot them down.

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7.11: Writing an Annotated Bibliography

As you are gathering sources in your research, you will want to keep track of which information comes from what source. While other strategies have been discussed such as note taking, some researchers use an annotated bibliography for long term reference purposes. As the name implies, an annotated bibliography is the bibliographical reference of a given source along with key information from that source that you may use for future reference. As assignment parameters will vary by instructor, generally speaking the annotations are 150-200 words in length per source and do not include quoted material. The purpose of the annotations is to summarize the material within the context of your thesis statement.

Annotated Bibliographies follow a common structure and format. Below is an explanation of the elements and format of an annotated bibliography.

Components of an Annotated Bibliography

An annotation often offers a summary of a source that you intend to use for a research project as well as some assessment of the source's relevance to your project or quality and credibility. There are two key components for each source: the citation and the annotation.

The Annotated Bibliography Samples page[1] on the Purdue OWL offers examples of general formatting guidelines for both an MLA and an APA Annotated Bibliography.

Citation

You will provide the full bibliographic reference for the source: author, title, source title, and other required information depending on the type of source. This will be formatted just as it would be in a typical Works Cited for an MLA paper or a References page for an APA paper.

Annotation

Tone and Style

Some elements can vary depending on the style you are using (e.g., APA or MLA). Be sure to review your style guide along with your assignment sheet. Generally speaking, use the following as a guide:

- Use signal phrases to refer to the author(s).
- Always maintain a neutral tone and use the third-person point of view and correct tense according to style guide (present tense for MLA, past tense for APA) (i.e., *Tompkins asserts…*).
- Keep the focus of the summary on the text, not on what you think of it, and try to put as most of the summary as you can in your own words. If you must use exact phrases from the source that you are summarizing, you must quote and cite them.
- Annotations should not be a replication of the abstract provided by the source.

What to Include in Annotations

1. After the bibliographical information, begin to discuss the source. Begin with a general summary of the source. Describe the key sections of the text and their corresponding main points. Try to avoid focusing on details; a summary covers the essential points and typically does not include quoted material.
2. Evaluate the source's credibility or relevance. Is the author an expert on the topic? How do you know? Is the source peer-reviewed or otherwise credible in nature? How do you know? What makes this source a good one to use?
3. Discuss how you plan to integrate the source in your paper. Do you need to point out similarities or differences with other sources in the annotated bibliography? How does it support (or refute) your intended thesis?

Review your Annotated Bibliography assignment sheet for additional content requirements**.** Instructors often require more than a simple summary of each source, and specific requirements may vary. Any (or all) of these aspects *may* be required in an annotated bibliography, depending on how or if your instructor has designed this assignment as part of a larger research project.

This section contains material from:

Gagich, Melanie, and Emilie Zickel. "Keeping Track of Your Sources and Writing an Annotated Bibliography." In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/annotated-bibliography/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

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Jeffrey, Robin. *About Writing: A Guide*. Portland, OR: Open Oregon Educational Resources. Accessed December 18, 2020. https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/aboutwriting/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

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1. "Annotated Bibliography Samples," Purdue Online Writing Lab, accessed December 20, 2021, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/annotated_bibliographies/annotated_bibliography_samples.html. ↵

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7.12: From Annotated Bibliography to Rough Draft- How to Develop your Position

Now that you've completed your annotated bibliography, you may find yourself struggling with how to begin the rough draft of the researched position paper assignment. A researched position paper is simply an argumentative essay in which you take a position on a chosen topic and defend it with secondary sources. While it may be easy for you to state your position and reasons for your argument, you may find it difficult to incorporate your secondary sources into your own draft and still maintain your own voice. Now is the time to break out the scissors.

In this exercise, you are becoming part of the academic discussion, or discourse community, on your chosen topic. Now that you have located sources that either agree or disagree with your position, it's time to see how those sources inform your thesis. If your annotated bibliography is printed on continuous pages, cut the annotations apart making certain to leave the bibliographical information with each annotation. Once you have done this, arrange the annotations on a table in front of you and imagine that each source is a person standing before you speaking. The topic about which they are speaking is the information contained in your annotation.

Now imagine that your best friend just walked up behind you and asked, "Hey, what are you all discussing?" Your one or two sentence answer is your thesis. That response sums up the gist of the argument being discussed and makes clear your position on the topic. Even if you had a working thesis beforehand, it's okay to revise it at this point to more clearly match the debate being presented by your sources. It's still your position – after all, you chose the sources.

Next, in selecting how to arrange the sources to create a rough draft, imagine the conversation again. Which one of the sources provides the strongest support for your position? Which one offers a counterargument? Which one(s) provide evidence which gives the argument logos credibility? As you hear the conversation in your head, arrange your annotations to begin to visualize the outline for your rough draft. However, do not copy/paste the annotations into your rough draft. Instead, incorporate the information you've identified into your own argument making sure to be cognizant of syntax.

Pantuso, Terri, Sarah LeMire, and Kathy Anders, eds. *Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research*. 3rd ed. College Station: Texas A&M University, 2022. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

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7.13: Applying Your Research

At this point in your project, you are preparing to move from the research phase to the writing phase. You have gathered much of the information you will use, and soon you will be ready to begin writing your draft. This section helps you transition smoothly from one phase to the next.

Beginning writers sometimes attempt to transform a pile of note cards into a formal research paper without any intermediary step. This approach presents problems. The writer's original question and thesis may be buried in a flood of disconnected details taken from researched sources. The first draft may present redundant or contradictory information. Worst of all, the writer's ideas and voice may be lost.

An effective research paper focuses on the writer's ideas—from the question that sparked the research process to how the writer answers that question based on the research findings. Before beginning a draft, or even an outline, good writers pause and reflect. They ask themselves questions such as the following:

- How has my thinking changed based on my research? What have I learned?
- Was my working thesis on target? Do I need to rework my thesis based on what I have learned?
- How does the information in my sources mesh with my research questions and help me answer those questions?
- Have any additional important questions or subtopics come up that I will need to address in my paper?
- How do my sources complement each other? What ideas or facts recur in multiple sources?
- Where do my sources disagree with each other, and why?

In this section, you will reflect on your research and review the source material you have gathered. You will determine what you now think about your topic. You will synthesize, or put together, different pieces of information that help you answer your research questions. Finally, you will determine the organizational structure that works best for your paper and begin planning your outline.

Selecting Useful Details

At this point in the research process, you have gathered evidence, ideas, and information from a wide variety of sources. Now it is time to think about how you will use your source materials as a writer. When you conduct research, you keep an open mind and seek out many promising sources. You take notes on any information that looks like it might help you answer your research questions. Often, new ideas and terms come up in your reading, and these, too, find their way into your notes. You may record claims or examples that catch your attention and seem relevant to your research questions. By now, you have probably amassed an impressively detailed collection of notes. However, you will not use all of your notes in your paper.

Effective writers are selective. They determine which information is most relevant and appropriate for their purpose. They include details that develop or explain their ideas— and they leave out details that do not. The writer, not the notes, is the controlling force. The writer shapes the content of the research paper. While gathering sources, you used strategies to filter out irrelevant and unreliable sources and details. Now you will apply your critical-thinking skills to the details you recorded—analyzing how it is relevant, determining the ways in which it meshes with your ideas and forms patterns.

As Jorge reviewed his research, he realized that some of the information was not especially useful for his purpose. His notes included several statements about the relationship between soft drinks that are high in sugar and childhood obesity—a subtopic that was too far outside of the main focus of the paper. Jorge decided to cut this material.

Do not feel anxious if you still have trouble seeing the big picture. Systematically looking through your notes will help you. Begin by identifying the notes that clearly support your thesis. Mark or group these, either physically or using the cut-and-paste function in your word-processing program. As you identify the crucial details that support your thesis, make sure you analyze them critically. Ask the following questions to focus your thinking:

- **Is this detail from a reliable, high-quality source?** Is it appropriate for me to cite this source in an academic paper? The bulk of the support for your thesis should come from reliable, reputable sources. You've already thought about and made choices in the quality of sources you gathered earlier in the research process. If most of the details that support your thesis are from less-reliable sources, you may need to do additional research or modify your thesis.
- **Is the link between this information and my thesis obvious—or will I need to explain it to my readers?** Remember, you have spent more time thinking and reading about this topic than your audience. Some connections might be obvious to both you and your readers. More often, however, you will need to provide the analysis or explanation that shows how the information supports your thesis. As you read through your notes, jot down ideas you have for making those connections clear.

- **What personal biases or experiences might affect the way I interpret this information?** No researcher is 100 percent objective. We all have personal opinions and experiences that influence our reactions to what we read and learn. Good researchers are aware of this human tendency. They keep an open mind when they read opinions or facts that contradict their beliefs.

It can be tempting to ignore information that does not support your thesis or that contradicts it outright. However, such information is important. At the very least, it gives you a sense of what has been written about the topic. More importantly, it can help you question and refine your own thinking so that writing your research paper is a true learning process. Remember, your working thesis is not set in stone. You can and should change your working thesis throughout the research writing process if the evidence you find does not support your tentative thesis. Never try to force evidence to fit your argument. For example, suppose your tentative thesis is "Mars cannot support life-forms." Yet, a week into researching your topic, you find an article in *The New York Times* detailing new findings of bacteria under the Martian surface. Instead of trying to argue that bacteria are not life forms, you would do better to alter your thesis to "Mars cannot support complex life-forms." In sum, you should carefully consider how information that challenges your thesis fits into the big picture of your research. You may decide that the source is unreliable or the information is irrelevant, or you may decide that it is an important point you need to bring up. What matters is that you give careful consideration to various perspectives and current research on the topic.

Writing at Work

When you create workplace documents based on research, selectivity remains important. A project team may spend months conducting market surveys to prepare for rolling out a new product, but few managers have time to read the research in its entirety. Most employees want the research distilled into a few well-supported points. Focused, concise writing is highly valued in the workplace.

Finding Connections between Sources

As you find connections between your ideas and information in your sources, also look for commonalities between your sources. Do most sources seem to agree on a particular idea? Are some facts mentioned repeatedly in many different sources? What key terms or major concepts come up in most of your sources regardless of whether the sources agree on the finer points? Identifying these connections will help you identify important ideas to discuss in your paper. Look for subtler ways your sources complement one another, too. Does one author refer to another's book or article? How do sources that are more recent build upon the ideas developed in earlier sources?

Be aware of any redundancies in your sources. If you have amassed solid support from a reputable source, such as a scholarly journal, there is no need to cite the same facts from an online encyclopedia article that is many steps removed from any primary research. If a given source adds nothing new to your discussion and you can cite a stronger source for the same information, use the stronger source.

Determine how you will address any contradictions found among different sources. For instance, if one source cites a startling fact that you cannot confirm anywhere else, it is safe to dismiss the information as unreliable. However, if you find significant disagreements among reliable sources, you will need to review them and evaluate each source. Which source presents a sounder argument or more solid evidence? It is up to you to determine which source is the most credible and why.

Reevaluating Your Working Thesis

A careful analysis of your notes will help you reevaluate your working thesis and determine whether you need to revise it. Remember that your working thesis was the starting point—not necessarily the end point—of your research. You should revise your working thesis if your ideas have changed. Even if your sources generally confirmed your preliminary thinking on the topic, it is still a good idea to tweak the wording of your thesis to incorporate the specific details you learned from research.

Jorge realized that his working thesis oversimplified the issues. He still believed that the media was exaggerating the benefits of low-carb diets. However, his research led him to conclude that these diets did have some advantages. Read Jorge's revised thesis:

> *Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.*

? Exercise 14

Review your research questions and working thesis again. This time, keep them nearby as you review your research notes. Identify information that supports your working thesis. Identify details that call your thesis into question. Determine whether you need to modify your thesis. Use your research questions to identify key ideas in your paper. Begin categorizing your notes according to which topics are addressed. You may find yourself adding important topics or deleting unimportant ones as you proceed. Write out your revised thesis and at least two or three big ideas.

Synthesizing Source Material

By now, your ideas about your topic are taking shape. You have a sense of what major ideas to address in your paper, what points you can easily support, and what questions or subtopics might need a little more thought. In short, you have begun the process of synthesizing source material—that is, of putting the pieces together into a coherent whole.

It is normal to find this part of the process a little difficult. Some questions or concepts may still be unclear to you. You may not yet know how you will tie all of your research together. Synthesizing is a complex, demanding mental task, and even experienced researchers struggle with it at times. A little uncertainty is often a good sign. It means you are challenging yourself to work thoughtfully with your topic instead of simply restating the same information.

You have already considered how your notes fit with your working thesis. Now, take your synthesis a step further. Analyze how your notes relate to your major research question and the subquestions you identified at the start of the research process. Organize your notes with headings that correspond to those questions. As you proceed, you might identify some important subtopics that were not part of your original plan, or you might decide that some questions are not relevant to your paper.

Categorize information carefully, and continue to think critically about the material. Ask yourself whether the connections between ideas are clear. Remember, your ideas and conclusions will shape the paper. They are the glue that holds the rest of the content together. As you work, begin jotting down the big ideas you will use to connect the dots for your reader. (If you are not sure where to begin, try answering your major research question and subquestions. Add and answer new questions as appropriate.) You might record these big ideas on paper sticky notes or type them into a word-processing document or other digital format.

Jorge looked back on the list of research questions that he had written down earlier. He changed a few to match his new thesis, and he began the following rough outline for his paper:

Topic: Low-carbohydrate diets

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

Thesis: Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

Main points:

How do low-carb diets work? Low-carb diets cause weight loss by lowering insulin levels, causing the body to burn stored fat.

When did low-carbohydrate diets become a 'hot' topic in the media? The Atlkins diet was created by Richard Atkins in 1972, but it didn't gain wide-scale attention until 2003. The South Beach diet and other low-carb diets became popular around the same time, and led to a lowcarb craze in America from 2003 to 2004.

What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet? They are said to help you lose weight faster than other diets and allow people to continue eat protein and fats while dieting.

What are some of the negative effects of a low-carb diet? Eating foods higher in saturated fats can increase your cholesterol levels and lead to heart disease. Incomplete fat breakdown can lead to a condition called ketosis, which puts a strain on the liver and can be fatal.

Planning How to Organize Your Paper

You may be wondering how your ideas are supposed to shape the paper, especially since you are writing a research paper based on your research. Integrating your ideas and your information from research is a complex process, and sometimes it can be difficult to separate the two. Some paragraphs in your paper will consist mostly of details from your research. That is fine, as long as you explain what those details mean or how they are linked. You should also include sentences and transitions that show the

relationship between different claims and evidence from your research by grouping related ideas or pointing out connections or contrasts. The result is that you are not simply presenting information; you are synthesizing, analyzing, and interpreting it.

The final step to complete before beginning your draft is to choose an organizational structure. For some assignments, this may be determined by the instructor's requirements. For instance, if you are asked to explore the impact of a new communications device, a cause-and-effect structure is obviously appropriate. In other cases, you will need to determine the structure based on what suits your topic and purpose. For more information about the structures used in writing, see the chapter on Rhetorical Modes of Writing.

The purpose of Jorge's paper was primarily to persuade. With that in mind, he planned the following outline.

I. Introduction
   A. Background
   B. Thesis

II. Purported Benefits of Low-Carbohydrate Diets
   A. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition guidelines
   B. Potential flaws in USDA nutrition guidelines
      1. Effects of carbohydrates on blood sugar, insulin
      2. Relationship to metabolism and obesity

III. Research on Low-Carbohydrate Diets and Weight Loss
   A. Short-term effectiveness for weight-loss
   B. Long-term effectiveness not established

IV. Other Long-Term Health Outcomes
   A. Cholesterol and heart disease
   B. Blood pressure
   C. Diabetes

V. Conclusion

Writing at Work

The structures described in this section and in the chapter on Rhetorical Modes can also help you organize information in different types of workplace documents. For instance, medical incident reports and police reports follow a chronological structure. If the company must choose between two vendors to provide a service, you might write an email to your supervisor comparing and contrasting the choices. Understanding when and how to use each organizational structure can help you write workplace documents efficiently and effectively.

? Exercise 15

Review the organizational structures discussed in Rhetorical Modes. Working with the notes you organized earlier, follow these steps to begin planning how to organize your paper. Create an outline that includes your thesis, major subtopics, and supporting points. The major headings in your outline will become sections or paragraphs in your paper. Remember that your ideas should form the backbone of the paper. For each major section of your outline, write out a topic sentence stating the main point you will make in that section. You may find that some points are too complex to explain in a sentence. Consider whether any major sections of your outline need to be broken up, and jot down additional topic sentences as needed. Review your notes and determine how the different pieces of information fit into your outline as supporting points.

? Exercise 16

Collaborative exercise: Exchange outlines of your research papers with a classmate. Examine your classmate's outline to see if any questions come to mind and if you see any levels that would benefit from additional support, elaboration, or clarification. Return outlines to each other and compare observations.

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7.14: Writing Your Draft

At last, you are ready to begin writing the rough draft of your research paper. Putting your thinking and research into words is exciting. It can also be challenging. In this section, you will learn strategies for drafting your research paper, such as integrating material from your sources, citing information correctly, and avoiding misuse of your sources.

The Structure of a Research Paper

Research papers generally follow the same basic structure: an introduction that presents the writer's thesis; a body section that develops the thesis with supporting points and evidence; and a conclusion that revisits the thesis and provides additional insights or suggestions for further research.

Your writing voice will come across most strongly in your **introduction** and **conclusion** as you work to attract your readers' interest and establish your thesis. These sections usually do not cite sources at length. They focus on the big picture, not specific details. In contrast, the body of your paper will cite sources extensively. As you present your ideas, you will support your points with details from your research.

Writing Your Introduction

There are several approaches to writing an introduction, each of which fulfills the same goals. The introduction should get readers' attention, provide background information, and present the writer's thesis. Many writers like to begin with one of the following catchy openers:

- A surprising fact
- A thought-provoking question
- An attention-getting quote
- A brief anecdote that illustrates a larger concept
- A connection between your topic and your readers' experiences

The next few sentences place the opening in context by presenting background information. From there, the writer builds toward a thesis, which is traditionally placed at the end of the introduction. Think of your thesis as a signpost that lets readers know in what direction the paper is headed.

Jorge decided to begin his research paper by connecting his topic to readers' daily experiences. Read the **first draft of his introduction**. The thesis is in bold. Note how Jorge progresses from the opening sentences, to background information, to his thesis.

Introduction Draft

> *Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets*
>
> *Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. Some studies, such as those conducted by Lisa Sanders and David L. Katz and by Julie Hirsch, estimate that approximately forty million Americans, or about twenty percent of the population, are attempting to restrict their intake of food high in carbohydrates. Proponents of low-carb diets say they are not only the most effective way to lose weight, but they also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low-carb diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown.* ***Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.***

Writers often work out of sequence when writing a research paper. If you find yourself struggling to write an engaging introduction, you may wish to write the body of your paper first. Writing the body sections first will help you clarify your main points. Writing the introduction should then be easier. You may have a better sense of how to introduce the paper after you have drafted some or all of the body.

? Exercise 17

Draft the introductory paragraph of your research paper. Use one of the common techniques for writing an engaging introduction. Be sure to include background information about the topic that leads to your thesis.

Writing Your Conclusion

In your introduction, you tell readers where they are headed. In your conclusion, you recap where they have been. For this reason, some writers prefer to write their conclusions soon after they have written their introduction. However, this method may not work for all writers. Other writers prefer to write their conclusion at the end of the paper, after writing the body paragraphs. No process is absolutely right or absolutely wrong; find the one that best suits you.

No matter when you compose the conclusion, it should revisit your thesis and sum up your main ideas. The conclusion should not simply echo the introduction or rely on bland summary statements, such as "In this paper, I have demonstrated that.…" In fact, avoid repeating your thesis verbatim from the introduction. Restate it in different words that reflect the new perspective gained through your research. That helps keep your ideas fresh for your readers. An effective writer might conclude a paper by asking a new question the research inspired, revisiting an anecdote presented earlier, or reminding readers of how the topic relates to their lives.

Using Primary and Secondary Research

As you write your draft, be mindful of how you are using primary and secondary source material to support your points. Recall that primary sources present firsthand information. Secondary sources are one step removed from primary sources. They present analyses or interpretations of primary sources. How you balance primary and secondary source material in your paper will depend on the topic and assignment.

Some types of research papers must use primary sources extensively to achieve their purpose. Any paper that analyzes a primary text or presents the writer's own experimental research falls in this category. Here are a few examples:

- A paper for a **literature** course analyzing several poems by Emily Dickinson
- A paper for a **political science** course comparing televised speeches delivered by two presidential candidates
- A paper for a **communications** course discussing gender biases in television commercials
- A paper for a **business administration** course that discusses the results of a survey the writer conducted with local businesses to gather information about their work-from-home and flextime policies
- A paper for an **elementary education** course that discusses the results of an experiment the writer conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different methods of mathematics instruction

For these types of papers, primary research is the main focus. If you are writing about a work (including non-print works, such as a movie or a painting), it is crucial to gather information and ideas from the original work, rather than relying solely on others' interpretations. And, of course, if you take the time to design and conduct your own field research, such as a survey, a series of interviews, or an experiment, you will want to discuss it in detail. Interviews may provide interesting responses that you want to share with your readers.

Even if your paper is largely based on primary sources, you may use secondary sources to develop your ideas. For instance, an analysis of Alfred Hitchcock's films would focus on the films themselves as primary sources, but it might also cite commentary and interpretations by critics. A paper that presents an original experiment would include some discussion of similar prior research in the field.

For some assignments, it makes sense to rely more on secondary sources than primary sources. If you are not analyzing a text or conducting your own field research, then you will need to use secondary sources extensively. As much as possible, use secondary sources that are closely linked to primary research, such as a journal article that presents the results of the authors' scientific study or a book that cites interviews and case studies. These sources are more reliable and add more value to your paper than sources that are further removed from primary research. For instance, a popular magazine article on junk-food addiction might be several steps removed from the original scientific study on which it is loosely based. As a result, the article may distort, sensationalize, or misinterpret the scientists' findings.

Jorge knew he did not have the time, resources, or experience needed to conduct original experimental research for his paper. Because he was relying on secondary sources to support his ideas, he made a point of citing sources that were not far removed from

primary research.

Incorporating Source Material into Your Body Paragraphs

One of the challenges of writing a research paper is successfully integrating your ideas with material from your sources. Your paper must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research, or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the right balance?

You have already taken a step in the right direction if you have drafted your introduction and conclusion. The introduction and conclusion function like the frame around a picture. They define and limit your topic and place your research in context. However, you may choose to wait to write your introduction and conclusion until after writing your body paragraphs. Either way, as you draft your body paragraphs, you must express your critical thinking about the ideas and information that you incorporate from your sources. You must offer claims of your own that either challenge or extend points from your sources.

In the body paragraphs of your paper, you will need to integrate ideas carefully at the paragraph level and at the sentence level. Use topic sentences and concluding sentences of body paragraphs to make sure readers understand the significance of any facts, details, or points you cite. In particular, you must continually explain how source material relates to your thesis. Indicate your interpretation of, and attitude toward, source material within and between sentences in which you summarize, paraphrase, or quote material from your sources. You will also include sentences that transition between ideas from your research, either within a paragraph or from one paragraph to the next. At the sentence level, you will need to think carefully about how you introduce your summarized, paraphrased, and quoted material.

You have already learned about summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources when taking notes. Here, you will learn how to use these techniques in the body of your paper to weave in source material to develop your ideas.

Introducing Cited Material Effectively

Including a signal phrase in your text, such as “Jackson wrote” or “Copeland found,” often helps you integrate source material smoothly. This citation technique also helps convey that you are actively engaged with your source material. Unfortunately, during the process of writing your research paper, it is easy to fall into a rut and use the same few dull verbs repeatedly, such as “Jones said,” “Smith stated,” and so on. Punch up your writing by using strong verbs that help your reader understand how the source material presents ideas. There is a world of difference between an author who “suggests” and one who “claims,” one who “questions” and one who “criticizes.” You do not need to consult your thesaurus every time you cite a source, but do think about which verbs will accurately represent the ideas and make your writing more engaging.

The following list includes some possibilities:

- argue
- ask
- assert
- assess
- believe
- claim
- compare
- conclude
- contrast
- determine
- evaluate
- explain
- find
- hypothesize
- insist
- measure
- point out
- propose
- question
- recommend

- study
- suggest
- sum up
- warn

Summarizing Sources

When you summarize material from a source, you zero in on the main points and restate them concisely in your own words. This technique is appropriate when only the major ideas are relevant to your paper or when you need to simplify complex information into a few key points for your readers. Be sure to review the source material as you summarize it. Identify the main idea and restate it as concisely as you can— preferably in one sentence. Depending on your purpose, you may also add another sentence or two condensing any important details or examples. Check your summary to make sure it is accurate and complete.

In his draft, Jorge summarized research materials that presented scientists' findings about low-carbohydrate diets. Read the following passage from a trade magazine article and Jorge's summary of the article.

Assessing the Efficacy of Low-Carbohydrate Diets (from Adrienne Howell, Ph.D.)

Over the past few years, a number of clinical studies have explored whether high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets are more effective for weight loss than other frequently recommended diet plans, such as diets that drastically curtail fat intake (Pritikin) or that emphasize consuming lean meats, grains, vegetables, and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats (the Mediterranean diet). A 2009 study found that obese teenagers who followed a low-carbohydrate diet lost an average of 15.6 kilograms over a six-month period, whereas teenagers following a low-fat diet or a Mediterranean diet lost an average of 11.1 kilograms and 9.3 kilograms respectively. Two 2010 studies that measured weight loss for obese adults following these same three diet plans found similar results. Over three months, subjects on the low-carbohydrate diet plan lost anywhere from four to six kilograms more than subjects who followed other diet plans.

Sample Summary

> *Adrienne Howell points out that in three recent studies, researchers compared outcomes for obese subjects who followed either a low-carbohydrate diet, a low-fat diet, or a Mediterranean diet and found that subjects following a low-carbohydrate diet lost more weight in the same time.*

A summary restates ideas in your own words—but for specialized or clinical terms, you may need to use terms that appear in the original source. For instance, Jorge used the term obese in his summary because related words such as heavy or overweight have a different clinical meaning.

Paraphrasing Sources

When you paraphrase material from a source, restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them. Again, it is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing—that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer's own language and style.

In his draft, Jorge frequently paraphrased details from sources. At times, he needed to rewrite a sentence more than once to ensure he was paraphrasing ideas correctly. Read the following passage from a website. Then read Jorge's initial attempt at paraphrasing it, followed by the final version of his paraphrase.

Original Source (from Tracy Niethercott) Some insulin users in particular find that their blood glucose is far easier to control when they limit the carbs in their diet.

Initial Paraphrase

> *According to one source, some people find they can control their blood glucose when they limit the carbs they eat (Neithercott).*

After reviewing the paraphrased sentence, Jorge realized he was following the original source too closely. He did not want to quote the full passage verbatim, so he again attempted to restate the idea in his own style.

Revised Paraphrase

> *Some people with diabetes are better able to control their blood sugar when they reduce their carb intake (Neithercott).*

Quoting Sources Directly

Most of the time, you will summarize or paraphrase source material instead of quoting directly. Doing so shows that you understand your research well enough to write about it confidently in your own words. However, direct quotes can be powerful when used sparingly and with purpose.

Quoting directly can sometimes help you make a point in a colorful way. If an author's words are especially vivid, memorable, or well phrased, quoting them may help hold your reader's interest. Direct quotations from an interviewee or an eyewitness may help you personalize an issue for readers. And when you analyze primary sources, such as a historical speech or a work of literature, quoting extensively is often necessary to illustrate your points. These are valid reasons to use quotations.

Less experienced writers, however, sometimes overuse direct quotations in a research paper because it seems easier than paraphrasing. At best, this reduces the effectiveness of the quotations. At worst, it results in a paper that seems haphazardly pasted together from outside sources. Use quotations sparingly for greater impact. When you do choose to quote directly from a source, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure you have transcribed the original statement accurately.
- Represent the author's ideas honestly. Quote enough of the original text to reflect the author's point accurately.
- Never use a stand-alone, or "dropped in," quotation. Always integrate the quoted material into your own sentence.
- Use ellipses (…) if you need to omit a word or phrase. Use brackets [ ] if you need to replace a word or phrase or add any explanation or clarification of the original.
- Make sure any omissions or changed words do not alter the meaning of the original text. Omit or replace words only when absolutely necessary to shorten the text or to make it grammatically correct within your sentence.
- Remember to include correctly formatted citations that follow the assigned style guide.

Jorge wanted to use the following information from an article on the American Heart Association's website.

Original Source (from the American Heart Association)

> *A high carbohydrate diet that includes fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy products and whole grains also has been shown to reduce blood pressure.*

Because this particular sentence would be difficult to paraphrase properly, Jorge decided to quote it instead.

Quotation from the Source

> *According to the American Heart Association, "A high carbohydrate diet that includes fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy products and whole grains also has been shown to reduce blood pressure."*

Notice how Jorge smoothly integrated the quoted material by starting the sentence with an introductory, or "**signal**," phrase.

Writing at Work

It is important to accurately represent a colleague's ideas or communications in the workplace. When writing professional or academic papers, be mindful of how the words you use to describe someone's tone or ideas carry certain connotations. Do not say a source argues a particular point unless an argument is, in fact, presented. Use lively language, but avoid language that is emotionally charged. Doing so will ensure you have represented your colleague's words in an authentic and accurate way.

Exercise 18

Write a one-sentence summary of a useful passage in one of your sources.

Exercise 19

To practice paraphrasing, choose an important idea or detail from your notes. Without looking at the original source, restate the idea in your own words. Check your paraphrase against the original text in the source. Make sure both your language and your sentence structure are original. Revise your paraphrase if necessary.

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7.15: Using Sources in Your Paper

Academic writing requires the use of signal phrases to properly embed quoted material and document information. While basic signal phrases require the use of the author's name and a strong verb, attribution tags emphasize different types of information related to the source in order to set up the quoted material and can help shape your reader's response to the information presented. In grammatical terms, an attribution tag can be viewed as an appositive, an adjectival clause following a noun that modifies the noun and provides contextual information. In the following examples, the signal phrases (appositives) are italicized.

Example

As Benjamin Franklin, *one of the Founding Fathers*, states, "Well done is better than well said."[1]

Example

The campaign slogan, "Yes we can," was highly successful for Barack Obama, *the 44th President of the United States*.

What you have to say is more important than the passage you are citing, so you want the information leading into your evidence/support to work to your advantage. A basic signal phrase is a device used to smoothly integrate quotations and paraphrases into your essay and consists of an author's name and an active verb indicating how the author is presenting the material. It is important for beginning academic writers to use signal phrases to clearly attribute textual evidence to an author and to avoid interrupting the flow of an essay.

Referring to the Author within a Signal Phrase

In most instances, a signal phrase should contain only the last name of the author or authors of the source text (as opposed to the author's first *and* last name). APA style guidelines require no reference to a first name at any point in an essay and few if any gender specific pronouns. But in MLA papers, if you are referring to an author for the first time in your essay, you should include that author's first name. Any future signal phrase should refer to the author by last name only or with a pronoun when it's perfectly clear to whom the pronoun refers.

Examples

Ellen J. Langer observes, "For us to pay attention to something for any amount of time, the image must be varied" (39).[2]

Langer continues, "Thus, for students who have trouble paying attention the problem may be that they are following the wrong instructions" (39).

She then states, "To pay constant, fixed attention to a thought or an image may be a kind of oxymoron" (39).

Notice how each signal phrase verb is followed by a comma, which is then followed by one space before the opening quotation mark.

Varying Your Verbs

While it's important to use signal phrase verbs, you'll want to make sure that you vary them to avoid repetition (rather than simply using "states" throughout your entire essay for example) in order to maintain your readers' interest and to indicate the author's intended use of the excerpted material. See below for examples of strong signal phrase verbs.

[table id=4 /]

Why Use Signal Phrases and Attributive Tags?

While many students may see attributive tags as filler, they can provide the audience with valuable insight into how you, the writer, intend the quoted material to be read/viewed. In addition to setting up the source evidence, attribution tags can also be used as meaningful transitions moving your readers between your ideas and those of your support.

In most instances, the first time the author is mentioned in an MLA style essay, it is a good idea to provide an attributive tag as well as the author's first and last name. When using APA style, list the author's first initial and last name. Style will vary with studies

including multiple authors.

While providing the author's credentials and title of the source are the most common attributions used, there are others we should be aware of.

Types of Attributive Tags (attributive tag is underlined in each example)

***Type*:** Author's credentials are indicated.

Example

Grace Chapmen, Curator of Human Health & Evolutionary Medicine at the Springfield Natural History Museum, explains…

Purpose: Presenting an author's credentials should help build credibility for the passage you are about to present. Including the author's credentials gives your readers a reason to consider your sources.

***Type*:** Author's *lack of* credentials is indicated.

Example

Matthew Spencer, whose background is in marriage counseling, not foreign policy, claims…

Purpose: Identifying an author's lack of credentials in a given area can help illustrate a lack of authority on the subject matter and persuade the audience not to adopt the author's ideas. Pointing to an author's lack of credentials can be beneficial when developing your response to counterarguments.

***Type*:** Author's social or political stance, if necessary to the content, is explained.

Example

Employing nonviolent civil disobedience, Roland Hayes, prominent civil rights activist, preaches… Ralph Spencer, who has ties to the White Nationalist movement, denies…

Purpose: Explaining the author's social or political stance can help a reader to understand why that author expresses a particular view. This understanding can positively or negatively influence an audience. Be careful to avoid engaging in logical fallacies such as loaded language.

***Type*:** Publisher of the source is identified.

Example

According to a recent *CNN* poll…

Purpose: Identifying the publisher of the passage can help reinforce the credibility of the information presented and you can capitalize on the reputation/ credibility of the publisher of the source material.

***Type*:** Title of the source is included.

Example

In "Understanding Human Behavior," Riley argues …

Purpose: Informs the reader where the cited passage is being pulled from.

***Type*:** Information that establishes context is presented.

Example

In a speech presented during a Free Speech rally, Elaine Wallace encourages …

Purpose: Presenting the context that the original information was presented can help the audience understand the author's purpose more clearly

Quoting

What are Direct Quotes?

Direct quotes are portions of a text taken word for word and placed inside of a work. Readers know when an author is using a direct quote because it is denoted by the use of quotation marks and an in-text citation.[3]

Example of Direct Quote

In his seminal work, David Bartholomae argues that "Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion-invent the university "(4).

Direct quotes might also be formatted as a "block quote" which occurs if the borrowed language is longer than four (4) lines of text in MLA formatting, or more than 40 words in APA formatting. In MLA, A block quote requires the author to indent the borrowed language by 1/2 an inch, place the citation at the end of the block, and remove quotation marks.

Example of Block Quote

In his seminal work, David Bartholomae argues that

> Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion-invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community. (4).

Be careful when using direct quotes because failing to write the text exactly as it appears in the original is not an ethical use of direct quotes. Also, failing to bracket the quote with quotation marks and/or cite it inside the text is also unethical. Both mistakes are a form of plagiarism.

When Should I Use Direct Quotes?

Generally speaking, direct quotes should be used sparingly because you want to rely on your own understanding of material and avoid over-relying on another's words. You want your voice to be the dominant one in an argument. Over quoting does not reinforce your credibility as an author; however, according to the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) you should use direct quotes when "the author you are quoting has coined a term unique to her or his research and relevant within your own paper."[4]

The Basics of Directly Quoting

1. All quoted material should be enclosed in quotation marks to set it off from the rest of the text. The exception to this is block quotes which require different formatting.
2. Quoted material should be an accurate word-for-word reproduction from the author's original text. You cannot alter any wording or any spelling. If you must do so, you must use a bracket or an ellipsis.
3. A clear signal phrase/attribution tag should precede each quotation.
4. A parenthetical citation should follow each quotation.

The Hard Part of Directly Quoting: Integrating Quotes into Your Writing

As the author of your essay, you should explain the significance of each quotation to your reader. This goes far beyond simply including a signal phrase. Explaining the significance means indicating how the quoted material supports the point you are making in that paragraph. Remember, just because you add a quote does not mean that you have made your point. Quotes never speak for themselves. When quoting material, ask yourself how and why does that quoted material make the point you think it does? Then,

follow the quote with a sentence that adds clarity for your insertion of that quoted material. Table 6.3.2 contains some helpful phrases for explaining quoted materials where "X" represents the author's last name.

[table id=7 /]

Sometimes, in order to smoothly integrate quoted material into your paper, you may need to remove a word or add a word to make the quote make sense. If you make any change to quoted material, it must be formatted correctly using an ellipsis or brackets. In the following, a portion of Hamlet's "To Be, or Not To Be" soliloquy is used as the exemplar:

Original quote: "To be, or not to be, that is the question"

- Use brackets [these are brackets] to change a word or add additional information.

Example

As Hamlet states, "To be, or not to be, that is the [essential] question."

- Use an ellipsis (this is an ellipsis…) to indicate omissions in the middle of a quote, not at the beginning or ending of quoted material.

Example

As Hamlet states, "To be, or not to be … is the question."

When in doubt, strive to allow your voice – not a quote from a source – to begin each paragraph, precede each quote, follow each quote, and end each paragraph. Quotes that are integrated well into a paper allow you to control the paper. That is what a reader wants to see: your ideas and the way that you engage sources to shape and discuss your ideas.

Paraphrasing and Summarizing

While quoting may be the first thing that many people think of when they think about integrating sources, paraphrasing, summarizing, and citing data are also ways to incorporate information from outside materials into your essays or projects.

Paraphrasing

1. Paraphrases allow you to describe specific information from a source (ideas from a paragraph or several consecutive paragraphs) *in your own words*.
2. Paraphrases are like translations of an author' original idea. You retain the detail of the original thought, but you express it in your own way.
3. Paraphrases of the text should be expressed in your own words, with your own sentence structure, in your own way. You should not simply "word swap"; that is, replace a few words from the original with synonyms.
4. If you must use a few of the author's words within your paraphrase, they must have quotation marks around them.
5. Paraphrases often include attributive tags (or signal phrases) to let your readers know where the paraphrased material begins.
6. Paraphrased material should be followed by a parenthetical citation.
7. As with a quote, you need to explain to your reader why the paraphrased material is significant to the point you are making in your paper.

Summarizing

1. Summaries allow you to describe general ideas from a source. You do not express detailed information as you would with a paraphrase.
2. Summaries are shorter than the original text.
3. Any summaries of the text should not include direct wording from the original source. All text should be in your words, though the ideas are those of the original author.
4. A signal phrase should let your readers know where the summarized material begins.
5. If you are offering a general summary of an entire article, there is no need to cite a specific page number.

Practice Activity

The original version of this chapter contained H5P content. You may want to remove or replace this element.

This section contains material from:

Lanning, John, and Amanda Lloyd. “Signal Phrases.” In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/apa-signal-phrases/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Gagich, Melanie. “Quoting.” In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/quoting-paraphrasing-and-summarizing-to-avoid-plagiarism/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Jeffrey, Robin. “Paraphrasing and Summarizing.” In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/9-3-paraphrasing-summarizing-and-integrating-data/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

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1. Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard, 1737*, Founders Online, National Archives, accessed December 18, 2020, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-02-02-0028. ↵
2. Ellen J. Langer, *The Power of Mindful Learning* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1997). ↵
3. The following examples come from: David Bartholomae, “Inventing the University,” *Journal of Basic Writing* 5, no. 3 (1986): 4-23. ↵
4. “How to Use Quotation Marks,” Purdue Online Writing Lab, accessed May 8, 2020, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/quotation_marks/index.html.↵

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7.16: Documenting Your Source Material

A reader interested in your subject wants not only to read what you wrote but also to be aware of the works that you used to create it. Readers may want to enter the discussion on your topic, using some of the same sources that you have. They also may want to examine your sources to see if you know your subject, if you missed anything, or if you offer anything new and interesting. Your sources may offer the reader additional insight on the subject being considered. It also demonstrates that you, as the author, are up-todate on what is happening in the field or on the subject. In sum, giving credit where it is due contributes to research on your topic and enhances your credibility.

Throughout the writing process, be scrupulous about documenting information taken from sources.

Again, there are multiple reasons for doing so:

- To give credit to others for their ideas
- To allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired
- To build your own reputation as a writer

It is important to indicate the source both in your essay and in a bibliography, list of references, or Works Cited, to prevent the possibility of plagiarism. If you follow the appropriate style guide (e.g., APA, Chicago Manual, and MLA), pay attention to detail, and clearly indicate your sources, then this approach to formatting and citation offers a proven way to demonstrate your respect for others and earn their respect in return.

Citing Sources in Your Paper

You need to cite all your information: if someone else wrote it, said it, drew it, demonstrated it, or otherwise expressed it, you need to cite it. The exception to this statement is common, widespread knowledge, but if you are ever in doubt, go ahead and document the material.

If you are using MLA style, then your citation of the source in the body of the essay will point to the Works Cited page at the end. You must cite your sources as you use them, mentioning the author or title of the source by name if you summarize its ideas and giving the author or title of the source as well as the page number (if available) in parentheses if you paraphrase or directly quote the source. The reference to the author or title is like a signal to readers that information has been incorporated from a separate source. It also provides readers with the information they need to locate the source in the Works Cited at the end of your essay where they can find the complete reference.

Rules for In-Text Citations:

The following examples illustrate basic rules for documenting sources within the text of your paper in MLA style:

Author named in the introduction to the paraphrase or quote: Jacob Leibowitz found that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar (56). Leibowitz states, “People with Type II diabetes should follow a low-carbohydrate diet in order to prevent weight gain and unbalanced blood-sugar levels” (56).

Author named in parentheses: One source indicates that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar (Leibowitz 56). A noted nutritionist advises diabetics: “People with Type II diabetes should follow a low-carbohydrate diet in order to prevent weight gain and unbalanced blood-sugar levels” (Leibowitz 56).

Unknown author: One website points out that a low-carbohydrate diet may aggravate a heart condition by raising a person’s bad cholesterol (“Cholesterol and the Low-carb Diet”).

Unknown or No Page Reference: The risks of following a low-carbohydrate diet outweigh any benefits according to one researcher (Jones). Gerald Jones believes that “a balanced diet is still the safest and most effective approach to good health.”

A source quoted in another source (an indirect quotation): “For the chronically overweight,” states Martin Rogers, “a low-carbohydrate diet may provide a viable option for weight loss” (qtd. in Evans 46).

? Exercise 20

Review in-text citations in your draft. Look for places where you introduce source material using a signal phrase in your sentence. Highlight the verbs used in your signal phrases, and make note of any that seem to be overused throughout the paper. Identify places where a stronger verb could be used. Revise your draft accordingly.

Creating a List of References

Each of the sources you cite in the body of your paper should appear in a list of references at the end of your paper. If you're using MLA style, then your Works Cited should list the sources alphabetically by last name, or by title if the author is not identified. While in-text citations provide the most basic information about the source, your Works Cited will include more complete publication details. There are a number of ways to learn how to properly cite your sources on your Works Cited:

- The MLA Guide at Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL)
- A current edition of The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.
- Online videos found by searching for "MLA style" on YouTube.

One of the many advantages of using sources from databases is that the databases themselves, or the platforms which host them, usually include a citation of the source at the bottom of the HTML full text of the source or a "Cite" tool accessible from the record of the source in the list of search results. When using these automatically-generated citations, be sure to select and copy the citation in the style that you have been assigned to use. Also, be sure to review the citation that the database or platform has generated, as it may include some errors in it. An error that consistently occurs using a "Cite" tool is the capitalization of titles; in the United States, the first letters of the first and last words of titles are always capitalized, and so are the first letters of all words in between except for articles (a, an, the), conjunctions (and, but, or), and prepositions (at, by, for, in, of, on, etc.). The "Cite" tool does not distinguish between parts of speech when capitalizing words in titles, so you will need to change some letters in titles to lowercase in order to properly format your citations.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Your research paper presents your thinking about a topic, supported and developed by other people's ideas and information. It is crucial to always distinguish between the two—as you conduct research, as you plan your paper, and as you write. Failure to do so can lead to plagiarism.

If you incorporate the words or ideas of a source into your own writing without giving full credit, then you are plagiarizing that source. In both professional and academic settings, the penalties for plagiarism are severe. In the professional world, plagiarism may result in loss of credibility, diminishment in compensation, and even loss of employment, including future opportunities. That is, employees may be fired for plagiarism and do irreparable damage to their professional reputation. In a class, a student's plagiarism may result in a range of sanctions, from the loss of points on an assignment to a failing grade in the course to expulsion from college.

The concepts and strategies discussed in this section connect to a larger issue— academic integrity. You maintain your integrity as a member of an academic community by representing your work and others' work honestly and by using other people's work only in legitimately accepted ways. It is a point of honor taken seriously in every academic discipline and career field. Even when cheating and plagiarism go undetected, they still result in a student's failure to learn necessary research and writing skills. In short, it is never worth the risk to plagiarize. For more information about Academic Integrity, consult your college's Student Handbook.

Working with Sources Carefully

Disorganization and carelessness sometimes lead to plagiarism. For instance, writers may be unable to provide complete, accurate citations if they did not record bibliographical information. Writers may cut and paste passages from websites into their papers and later forget where the material came from. Writers who procrastinate may rush through drafts; this easily leads to sloppy paraphrasing and inaccurate quotations. Any of these actions can create the appearance of plagiarism and lead to negative consequences. Carefully organizing your time and notes is the best guard against these forms of plagiarism. As discussed above, you should maintain a detailed working bibliography and thorough notes throughout the research process. As you incorporate source material into your draft, check original sources again to clear up any uncertainties. Schedule plenty of time for writing your draft so there is no temptation to cut corners.

Intentional and Accidental Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of misrepresenting someone else's work as your own. Sometimes a writer plagiarizes work on purpose—for instance, by purchasing an essay from a website and submitting it as original course work. In other cases, a writer may commit accidental plagiarism due to carelessness, haste, or misunderstanding. To avoid unintentional plagiarism, follow these guidelines:

- Understand what types of information must be cited.

- Understand what constitutes fair use of a source.
- Keep source materials and notes carefully organized.
- Follow guidelines for summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources.

When to Cite

Whether it is quoted or paraphrased, any idea or fact taken from an outside source must be cited, in both the body of your paper and your list of references. The only exceptions are facts or general statements that are common knowledge. Common-knowledge facts or general statements are commonly supported by and found in multiple sources. For example, a writer would not need to cite the statement that most breads, pastas, and cereals are high in carbohydrates; this is well known and well documented. However, if a writer explained in detail the differences among the chemical structures of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, a citation would be necessary. When in doubt, cite.

Fair Use

In recent years, issues related to the fair use of sources have been prevalent in popular culture. Recording artists, for example, may disagree about the extent to which one has the right to sample another's music. For academic purposes, however, the guidelines for fair use are reasonably straightforward. Writers may quote from or paraphrase material from previously published works without formally obtaining the copyright holder's permission. Fair use means that the writer legitimately uses brief excerpts from source material to support and develop his or her own ideas. For instance, a columnist may excerpt a few sentences from a novel when writing a book review. However, quoting or paraphrasing another's work at excessive length, to the extent that large sections of the writing are unoriginal, is not fair use.

As he worked on his draft, Jorge was careful to cite his sources correctly and not to rely excessively on any one source. Occasionally, however, he caught himself quoting a source at great length. In those instances, he highlighted the paragraph in question so that he could go back to it later and revise. Read the example, along with Jorge's revision.

Initial Use of Source Material

> *Heinz found that "subjects in the low-carbohydrate group (30% carbohydrates; 40% protein, 30% fat) had a mean weight loss of 10 kg (22 lbs) over a 4-month period." These results were "noticeably better than results for subjects on a low-fat diet (45% carbohydrates, 35% protein, 20% fat)" whose average weight loss was only "7 kg (15.4 lbs) in the same period." From this, it can be concluded that "low-carbohydrate diets obtain more rapid results." Other researchers agree that "at least in the short term, patients following low-carbohydrate diets enjoy greater success" than those who follow alternative plans (Johnson and Crowe).*

After reviewing the paragraph, Jorge realized that he had drifted into unoriginal writing. Most of the paragraph was taken verbatim from a single article. Although Jorge had enclosed the material in quotation marks, he knew it was not an appropriate way to use the research in his paper.

Revised Use of Source Material

> *Low-carbohydrate diets may indeed be superior to other diet plans for short-term weight loss. In a study comparing low-carbohydrate diets and low-fat diets, Heinz found that subjects who followed a low-carbohydrate plan (30% of total calories) for four months lost, on average, about three kilograms more than subjects who followed a low-fat diet for the same time. Heinz concluded that these plans yield quick results, an idea supported by a similar study conducted by Johnson and Crowe. What remains to be seen, however, is whether this initial success can be sustained for longer periods.*

As Jorge revised the paragraph, he realized he did not need to quote these sources directly. Instead, he paraphrased their most important findings. He also made sure to include a topic sentence stating the main idea of the paragraph and a concluding sentence that transitioned to the next major topic in his essay.

Writing at Work

Citing other people's work appropriately is just as important in the workplace as it is in school. If you need to consult outside sources to research a document you are creating, follow the general guidelines already discussed, as well as any industry-specific citation guidelines. For more extensive use of others' work—for instance, requesting permission to link to another company or organization's website on your own employer's website—always follow your employer's established procedures.

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7.17: Revising Your Draft

Given all the time and effort you have put into your research paper, you will want to make sure that your final draft represents your best work. This requires taking the time to revise and edit your paper carefully. You may feel that you need a break from your paper before you revise and edit it. That is understandable—but leave yourself with enough time to complete this important stage of the writing process. In this section, you will learn the following specific strategies that are useful for revising and editing a research paper:

- How to evaluate and improve the overall organization and cohesion
- How to maintain an appropriate style and tone
- How to use checklists to identify and correct any errors in language, citations, and formatting

Revising Your Paper's Organization and Cohesion

When writing a research paper, it is easy to become overly focused on editorial details, such as the proper format for bibliographic entries. These details do matter. However, before you begin to address them, it is important to spend time reviewing and revising the content of the paper. A good research paper is both organized and cohesive. Organization means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. Cohesion means that the elements of your paper work together smoothly and naturally. In a cohesive research paper, information from research is seamlessly integrated with the writer's ideas.

When you revise to improve organization, you look at the flow of ideas throughout the essay as a whole and within individual paragraphs. You check to see that your essay moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion, and that each section reinforces your thesis. Writers choose transitions carefully to show the relationships between ideas—for instance, to make a comparison or elaborate on a point with examples. Make sure your transitions suit your purpose, and avoid overusing the same ones. You can reference the Table of Common Transitional Words and Phrases to help find a variety of transition words.

Jorge reread his draft paragraph by paragraph. As he read, he highlighted the main idea of each paragraph so he could see whether his ideas proceeded in a logical order. For the most part, the flow of ideas was clear. However, he did notice that one paragraph did not have a clear main idea. It interrupted the flow of the writing. During revision, Jorge added a topic sentence that clearly connected the paragraph to the one that had preceded it. He also added transitions to improve the flow of ideas from sentence to sentence. Read the following paragraphs: the first example is Jorge's first draft without any changes, and the second paragraph shows his revisions.

First Draft:

> *Picture this: you're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? Some researchers estimate that approximately forty million Americans, or about one fifth of the population, have attempted to restrict their intake of foods high in carbohydrates (Sanders and Katz; Hirsch). Proponents of low carb diets say they are the most effective way to lose weight. They yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Some doctors claim that low carbohydrate diets are overrated and caution that their long term effects are unknown. Although following a low carbohydrate diet can have many benefits—especially for people who are obese or diabetic—these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.*

Revised Paragraph:

> *Picture this: you're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? Proponents of low carb diets say they are not only the most effective way to lose weight but also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low carbohydrate diets are overrated and caution that their long term effects are unknown. Although following a low carbohydrate diet can have many benefits—especially for people who are obese or diabetic—these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.*

When you revise to improve cohesion, you analyze how the parts of your paper work together. You look for anything that seems awkward or out of place. Revision may involve deleting unnecessary material or rewriting parts of the paper so that the out-of-place material fits in smoothly. In a research paper, problems with cohesion usually occur when a writer has trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer's point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect.

As Jorge reread his draft, he looked to see how the different pieces fit together to prove his thesis. He realized that he had too much information on the popularity of low-carb diets and the debate over their effect on weight loss, when his focus only emphasized the various health risks of low-carb diets, so he had to eliminate some material. He also realized that some of his supporting information needed to be integrated more carefully. Read the following paragraph, first without Jorge's revisions and then with them.

Initial Paragraph:

> *One likely reason for these lackluster long-term results is that a low carbohydrate diet—like any restrictive diet—is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. Most people enjoy foods that are high in carbohydrates, and no one wants to be the person who always turns down that slice of pizza or birthday cake. In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. They further comment that because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short lived. Medical professionals caution that low carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo Foundation). "For some people, [low carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well" (Kwon 78).*

Revised Paragraph:

> *One likely reason for these lackluster long-term results is that a low carbohydrate diet—like any restrictive diet—is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. They further comment that because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short lived. Medical professionals caution that low carbohydrate diets are*

> *difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo Foundation).*

Jorge decided that his comment about pizza and birthday cake came across as subjective and was not necessary to make his point, so he deleted it. He also realized that not only was the quotation at the end of the paragraph "dropped in," but also it was awkward and ineffective. How would his readers know who Kwon was or why her opinion should be taken seriously? Adding a signal phrase helped Jorge integrate this quotation smoothly and establish the credibility of his source.

Writing at Work

Understanding cohesion can also benefit you in the workplace, especially when you have to write and deliver a presentation. Speakers sometimes rely on cute graphics or funny quotations to hold their audience's attention. If you choose to use these elements, make sure they work well with the substantive content of your presentation. For example, if you are asked to give a financial presentation and the financial report shows that the company lost money, then funny illustrations would not be relevant or appropriate for the presentation.

? Exercise 21

Read your paper paragraph by paragraph. Highlight your thesis and the topic sentence of each paragraph. Using the thesis and topic sentences as starting points, outline the ideas you presented—just as you would do if you were outlining a chapter in a textbook. Do not look at the outline you created during prewriting. You may write in the margins of your draft or create a formal outline on a separate sheet of paper. Next, reread your paper more slowly, looking for how ideas flow from sentence to sentence. Identify places where adding a transition or recasting a sentence would make the ideas flow more logically. Review the topics on your outline. Is there a logical flow of ideas? Identify any places where you may need to reorganize ideas.

? Exercise 22: Collaborative Exercise

Exchange papers with a classmate. Apply the steps in Exercise 21 to your peer's draft. Share and discuss your observations about the draft's organization and clarity with your peer.

? Exercise 23

Read the body paragraphs of your paper first. Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, ask yourself what purpose this information serves. Check that it helps support a point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph. Identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete. Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources. Skim the body paragraphs once more, looking for any paragraphs that seem packed with citations. Review these paragraphs carefully for cohesion. Review your introduction and conclusion. Make sure the information presented works with ideas in the body of the paper.

? Exercise 24: Collaborative Exercise

Exchange papers with a classmate. Identify places your peer needs to revise so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources. Share and discuss your observations about the draft's incorporation of source material with your peer.

Revising to Improve Style and Tone

Once you are certain that the content of your paper fulfills your purpose, you can begin revising to improve style and tone. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your paper, or how you come across to readers. Style refers to the way you use language as a writer—the sentence structures you use and the word choices you make. Tone is the attitude toward your subject and audience that you convey through your word choice.

Although accepted writing styles will vary within different disciplines, the underlying goal is the same—to come across to your readers as a knowledgeable, authoritative guide. Writing about research is like being a tour guide who walks readers through a

topic. A stuffy, overly formal tour guide can make readers feel put off or intimidated. Too much informality or humor can make readers wonder whether the tour guide really knows what he or she is talking about. Extreme or emotionally charged language comes across as unbalanced.

To help prevent being overly formal or informal, determine an appropriate style and tone at the beginning of the research process. Consider your topic and audience because these can help dictate style and tone. For example, a paper on new breakthroughs in cancer research should be more formal than a paper on ways to get a good night's sleep. A strong research paper comes across as straightforward, appropriately academic, and serious.

Using plural nouns and pronouns or recasting a sentence can help you keep your language gender neutral while avoiding awkwardness. For example, the following sentence is gender-biased: "When a writer cites a source in the body of his paper, he must list it on his references page." The following is less gender biased but awkward: "When a writer cites a source in the body of his or her paper, he or she must list it on his or her references page." Making the subject third-person plural avoids bias and awkwardness: "Writers must list any sources cited in the body of a paper on the references page."

As you revise your paper, make sure your style is consistent throughout. Look for instances where a word, phrase, or sentence just does not seem to fit with the rest of the writing. It is best to reread for style after you have completed the other revisions so you are not distracted by any larger content issues. Revising strategies to use include the following:

- **Read your paper aloud**. Sometimes your ears catch inconsistencies that your eyes miss.
- **Share your paper** with another reader whom you trust to give you honest feedback. It is often difficult to evaluate one's own style objectively—especially in the final phase of a challenging writing project. Another reader may be more likely to notice instances of wordiness, confusing language, or other issues that affect style and tone.
- **Line edit** your paper slowly, sentence by sentence. You may even wish to use a sheet of paper to cover everything on the page except the paragraph you are editing—that forces you to read slowly and carefully. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

On reviewing his paper, Jorge found that he had generally used an appropriate academic style and tone. However, he noticed one glaring exception—his first paragraph. He realized there were places where his overly informal writing could come across as unserious or, worse, disparaging. Revising his word choice and omitting a humorous aside helped Jorge maintain a consistent tone. Read his revision below.

Initial Opening Paragraph:

> *Picture this: you're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?*

Revised Opening Paragraph:

> *Picture this: standing in the aisle of your local grocery store, you see an overweight man nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?*

Checklist for Revision

Ask yourself the following about your draft to help you revise for:

Organization

Overall:

- Does my introduction proceed clearly from the opening to the thesis?
- Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea that relates to the thesis?
- Do the main ideas in the body paragraphs flow in a logical order? Is each paragraph connected to the one before it?
- Do I need to add or revise topic sentences or transitions to make the overall flow of ideas clearer?
- Does my conclusion summarize my main ideas and revisit my thesis?

At the paragraph level:

- Does the topic sentence clearly state the main idea?
- Do the details in the paragraph relate to the main idea?
- Do I need to recast any sentences or add transitions to improve the flow of sentences?

Cohesion

- Does the opening of the paper clearly connect to the broader topic and thesis?
- Do entertaining quotations or anecdotes serve a purpose?
- Have I included support from research for each main point in the body of my paper?
- Have I included introductory material before any quotations so quotations do not stand alone in paragraphs?
- Does paraphrased and quoted material clearly serve to develop my own points?
- Do I need to add to or revise parts of the paper to help the reader understand how certain information from a source is relevant?
- Are there any places where I have overused material from sources?
- Does my conclusion make sense based on the rest of the paper?
- Are any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion clearly linked to earlier material?

Style and Tone

- Does my paper avoid excessive wordiness?
- Are my sentences varied in length and structure?
- Have I used points of view (pronouns) effectively and appropriately for the assignment?
- Have I used active voice whenever possible?
- Have I defined specialized terms that might be unfamiliar to readers?
- Have I used clear, straightforward language whenever possible and avoided unnecessary jargon?
- Does my paper support my argument using a balanced tone—neither too indecisive nor too forceful?
- Does my paper avoid vague or imprecise terms? Slang? Repetition of the same phrases (“Smith states…, Jones states…”) to introduce quoted and paraphrased material? Exclusive use of masculine pronouns or awkward use of he or she? Use of language with negative connotations? Use of outdated or offensive terms?

Editing Your Paper

After revising your paper to address problems in content or style, you will complete one final editorial review. Perhaps you have already caught and corrected minor mistakes during previous revisions. Nevertheless, give your draft a final edit to make sure it is error-free. Given how much work you have put into your research paper, you will want to check for any errors that could distract or confuse your readers. Using the spell-checking feature in your word-processing program can be helpful, but this should not replace a full, careful review of your document. Be sure to check for any errors that may have come up frequently for you in the past. Your final edit should focus on two broad areas:

- Errors in citing and formatting sources
- Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, and spelling

For in-depth information on these topics, see the chapter on Grammar, the Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab, or a print writing manual, such as *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

Writing at Work

Following MLA style guidelines may require time and effort. However, it is good practice to learn how to follow accepted conventions in any professional field. Many large corporations create a style manual with guidelines for editing and formatting documents produced by that corporation. Employees should follow the style manual when creating internal documents and documents for publication.

Checklist for Editing

Apply the following checklists to your paper before submitting your final draft:

Grammar, Mechanics, Punctuation, Usage, and Spelling

- My paper is free of grammatical errors, such as errors in subject-verb agreement and sentence fragments. For additional guidance, see: sentence writing, pronouns, verbs.
- My paper is free of errors in punctuation and mechanics, such as misplaced commas or incorrectly formatted source titles. For additional guidance, see: commas, semicolons.
- My paper is free of common usage errors, such as alot and alright. For additional guidance, see: word choice, commonly confused words.
- My paper is free of spelling errors. I have proofread my paper for spelling in addition to using the spell-checking feature in my word-processing program. For additional guidance, see: spelling.
- I have checked my paper for any editing errors that I know I tend to make frequently.

Citations

- Within the body of my paper, each fact or idea taken from a source is credited to the correct source.
- Each in-text citation includes the source author's name (or, if no author is given, the organization name or source title).
- I have used the correct format for in-text and parenthetical citations. If my source gives page numbers, I have included page numbers in parentheses directly after the quote or paraphrase taken from that page or pages.
- Each source cited in the body of my paper has a corresponding entry in the Works Cited at the end of my paper.

Formatting

- All entries in my Works Cited are in alphabetical order by author's last name (or by title or organization if no author is listed).
- My Works Cited is consistently double spaced (both within and between entries), and each entry uses proper indentation ("hanging indent": indented on the second and all subsequent lines).
- Each entry in my Works Cited includes all the necessary information for that source type, in the correct sequence and format.
- My paper includes a heading (with my name, course information, and date) in the upper left-hand corner of the first page; if no heading is used or the instructor requests it, substitute a title page for the heading.
- My paper includes a title that reflects the topic of my paper.
- My paper includes a running head (page numbers, or a header in the upper right-hand corner of each page of the paper).
- The margins of my paper are set at one inch. The text is double spaced and set in a standard 12-point font.

? Exercise 25

Re-read your paper line by line. Check for the issues noted in the questions about style and tone and the checklists about conventions, above, as well as any other sentence-level aspects of your writing that you have previously identified as areas for improvement. Mark any places in your paper where you notice problems in style, tone, or clarity and then take time to rework those sections.

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7.18: Sample Research Paper

Sample Student Paper

During the process of revising and editing, Jorge made changes in the content and style of his paper. He also gave the paper a final review to check for overall correctness and, particularly, correct style for his citations and formatting. Read the final draft of his paper.

Jorge Ramirez

Professor Thompson

English 1101

1 May 2014

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

Picture this: standing in the aisle of your local grocery store, you see an overweight man nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words “Low-Carb!” displayed prominently on the label. Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. Regardless of whether or not low-carb diets are most effective for weight loss, their potential benefits for weight loss must be weighed against other long-term health outcomes such as hypertension, the risk of heart disease, and cholesterol levels. Research findings in these areas are mixed. For this reason, people considering following a low-carbohydrate diet to lose weight should be advised of the potential risks in doing so.

Research on how low-carbohydrate diets affect cholesterol levels is inconclusive. Some researchers have found that low-carbohydrate diets raise levels of HDL, or “good” cholesterol (Ebbeling et al. 2093). Unfortunately, they may also raise levels of LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, which is associated with heart disease (Ebbeling et al. 2094). A particular concern is that as dieters on a low-carbohydrate plan increase their intake of meats and dairy products—foods that are high in protein and fat—they are also likely to consume increased amounts of saturated fats, resulting in clogged arteries and again increasing the risk of heart disease. Studies have identified possible risks to cardiovascular health associated with low-carb diets, so the American Heart Association cautions that doctors cannot yet assess how following a low-carbohydrate diet affects patients’ health over a long-term period.

Some studies have found that following a low-carb diet helped lower patients’ blood pressure (Bell 32). Again, however, excessive consumption of foods high in saturated fats may, over time, lead to the development of clogged arteries and increase risk of hypertension. According to the American Heart Association, “a high carbohydrate diet that includes fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy products and whole grains also has been shown to reduce blood pressure.” Eliminating those foods in a low-carb diet may raise blood pressure because intake of sodium may increase and intake of minerals like calcium, potassium, and magnesium, all of which are important for maintaining healthy blood pressure, may be decreased. Choosing lean meats over those high in fat and supplementing the diet with high-fiber, low glycemic index carbohydrates, such as leafy green vegetables, is a healthier plan for dieters to follow

Perhaps most surprisingly, low-carbohydrate diets are not necessarily advantageous for patients with Type II diabetes. According to Tracey Neithercott, some people with diabetes are better able to control their blood sugar when they reduce their carb intake, but others are not, and there are no studies that prove one single approach is best for everyone. One problem is that there are no long-term studies of a large scale that have examined this issue in detail. Neithercott advises diabetics to monitor blood sugar levels carefully and to consult with their health care provider or a registered dietitian to develop a plan for healthy eating.

Low-carb diets have garnered a great deal of positive attention, and it is not entirely undeserved. These diets do lead to rapid weight loss, and they often result in greater weight loss over a period of months than other diet plans. Significantly overweight or obese people may find low-carb eating plans the most effective for losing weight and reducing the risks associated with carrying excess body fat. However, because these diets are difficult for some people to adhere to and because their potential long-term health effects are still being debated, they are not necessarily the ideal choice for anyone who wants to lose weight. A moderately overweight person who wants to lose only a few pounds is best advised to choose whatever plan will help him stay active and consume fewer calories consistently—whether or not it involves eating low-carb ketchup.

Works Cited

Bell, John R. “Low Carb Beats Low Fat Diet for Early Losses but not Long Term.” *OBGYN News* 41.12 (2006): 32. *Medline with Full Text (at EBSCOhost)*. Web. 15 Apr. 2014.

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Neithercott, Tracey. “Are Carbs the Enemy? The Debate Over Eating and Diabetes.” *Diabetes Forecast: The Healthy Living Magazine*. March 2011. Web. 18 Apr. 2014.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: How and Why to Cite

8.1: An Overview of Quotations
8.2: An Overview of Paraphrases
8.3: How to Use Paraphrases and Quotations
8.4: Citations and Plagiarism

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8.1: An Overview of Quotations

KATELYN BURTON



Figure 8.1 Citation Needed

One of the most important skills you can develop as a student is the ability to use outside sources correctly and smoothly. Academic knowledge builds on the knowledge of others. When we cite others through our quotations and paraphrases, we start with ideas established by others and build upon them to develop our own ideas.

What is a Quotation?

A quotation is one way you may make use of a source to support and illustrate points in your essay. A quotation is made up of exact words from the source, and you must be careful to let your reader know that these words were not originally yours. To indicate your reliance on exact words from a source, either place the borrowed words between quotation marks or if the quotation is four lines or more, use indentation to create a block quotation.

Once you have determined that you want to use a quotation, the following strategies will help you smoothly fit quotations into your writing. We will discuss these strategies in more detail later in this chapter.

- Signal phrases help you integrate quoted material into your essay.
- Quotations must be made to work within the grammar of your sentences, whether you are quoting phrases or complete sentences.
- Quotations must be properly punctuated.
- Quotations must contain a citation.

When Should I Quote?

Quote when the exact wording is necessary to make your point. For example, if you were analyzing the style choices in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, you would quote because it would be important to illustrate the unforgettable language or to use exact wording in a discussion of word choice and sentence structure. You would also quote if the exact wording captures information, tone, or emotion that would be lost if the source were reworded. Use quotations to assist with conciseness if it would take you longer to relate the information if you were to put it into your own words. Finally, if you cannot reword the information yourself and retain its meaning, you should quote it.

Source: It has begun. It is awful—continuous and earthquaking.

Quoting to preserve emotion: One nurse described an exchange between the two sides as "awful—continuous and earthquaking" (Burton 120).

How Long Should a Quotation Be?

Quote only as many words as necessary to capture the information, tone, or expression from the original work for the new context that you are providing. Lengthy quotations actually can backfire on a writer because key words from the source may be hidden among less important words. In addition, your own words will be crowded out. Never quote a paragraph when a sentence will do; never quote a sentence when a phrase will do; never quote a phrase when a word will do.

Source: It has begun. It is awful—continuous and earthquaking.

Quoting everything: One nurse described an artillery exchange between the two sides. She wrote, "It has begun. It is awful—continuous and earthquaking" (Burton 120).

Quoting key words: One nurse described an artillery exchange between the two sides as “awful—continuous and earthquaking” (Burton 120).

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8.2: An Overview of Paraphrases

What is a Paraphrase?

A **paraphrase** preserves information from a source but does not preserve its exact wording. A paraphrase uses vocabulary and sentence structure that is largely different from the language in the original. A paraphrase may preserve specialized vocabulary shared by everyone in a field or discipline; otherwise, the writer paraphrasing a source starts fresh, creating new sentences that repurpose the information in the source so that the information plays a supportive role its new location.

When Should I Paraphrase?

Paraphrase when information from a source can help you explain or illustrate a point you are making in your own essay, but when the exact wording of the source is not crucial.

Source: The war against piracy cannot be won without mapping and dividing the tasks at hand. I divide this map into two parts: that which anyone can do now, and that which requires the help of lawmakers.

Paraphrase: Researchers argue that legislators will need to address the problem but that other people can get involved as well (Lessig 563).

If you were analyzing Lessig's style, you might want to quote his map metaphor; however, if you were focusing on his opinions about the need to reform copyright law, a paraphrase would be appropriate.

What is Effective Paraphrasing

Effective paraphrasing repurposes the information from a source so that the information plays a supportive role in its new location. This repurposing requires a writer to rely on her own sentence structure and vocabulary. She creates her own sentences and chooses her own words so the source's information will fit into the context of her own ideas and contribute to the development of her thesis.

Source: Citizens of this generation witnessed the first concerted attempt to disseminate knowledge about disease prevention and health promotion, downplaying or omitting altogether information about disease treatment.

Effective Paraphrase: Murphy pointed out that in the first half of the nineteenth century, people worked hard to spread information about how to prevent disease but did not emphasize how to treat diseases (415).

When Does Paraphrasing become Plaigirism?

A paraphrase should use vocabulary and sentence structure different from the source's vocabulary and sentence structure. Potential plagiarism occurs when a writer goes through a sentence from a source and inserts synonyms without rewriting the sentence as a whole.

Source: Citizens of this generation witnessed the first concerted attempt to disseminate knowledge about disease prevention and health promotion, downplaying or omitting altogether information about disease treatment.

Potential plagiarism: People of this period observed the first organized effort to share information about preventing disease and promoting health, deemphasizing or skipping completely information about treating diseases (Murphy 141).

The sentence structure of the bad paraphrase is identical to the sentence structure of the source, matching it almost word for word. The writer has provided an in-text citation pointing to Murphy as the source of the information, but she is, in fact, plagiarizing because she hasn't written her own sentence.

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8.3: How to Use Paraphrases and Quotations

Use signal phrases that mention your source to help your reader distinguish between the source and your own ideas. Do not drop quotes into your paper with no setup or explanation. This is your paper and your arguments must be supported; this includes showing how the quote or paraphrase connects to and proves your ideas. A signal verb introduces the quote that is coming and indicates your stance towards the material.

acknowledge	emphasize
admit	illustrate
agree	note
argue	observe
assert	point out
claim	report
comment	state
compare	suggest
complain	summarize
describe	write

Table 8.3.1 Some Sample Signal Verbs

Use different verbs of expression to avoid being monotonous but also because some verbs are better for setting up the point you are making. For example, to stress weakness in a source's argument, you might choose to write that your source *admits* or *concedes* a point.

Paraphrase with Signal Phrase

As the author points out, quotations are great, but sometimes paraphrases are better (DeVries 3).

Quotation with signal phrase:

In her diary, the nurse lamented that "one of the most stabbing things in this war is seeing the lines of empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks who at this moment are sound and fit" (Burton 413).

Some signal phrases do not make use of verbs but rely on signal phrases like *according to* or *in the opinion of* or *in the words of*.

How do I Make a Quotation Work with the Grammar of my Own Sentence?

Each quotation should be an element inside one of your own sentences and should not stand alone.

Example of an incorrect placement of quotation:

The author wrote about conditions for nurses during World War I. "One of the most stabbing things in this war is seeing the lines of empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks who at this moment are sound and fit" (Burton 441).

Notice that the quotation stands alone. It is not an element within one of your own sentences. Some beginning writers might try to correct the problem by changing the period after "World War II" to a comma. However, that simply tacks one sentence to the end of another and creates a punctuation error. Instead, each quotation must work within the grammar of one of your sentences.

One way to make a quotation work with sentence grammar is to place it after a verb of expression.

The author states, "One of the most stabbing things in this war is seeing the lines of empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks who at this moment are sound and fit" (Burton 498).

How do I Make a Quotation Work with the Grammar of my Own Sentence if I am not Quoting a Complete Sentence?

A quoted phrase can play any number of roles in the grammar of a sentence: verb, subject or object, adjective or adverb. Look at the example below and pretend that there are no quotation marks. Would the sentence still be grammatical? Yes. That shows that the quoted material works with the grammar of the sentence.

The nurse makes the ambulances sound like tow trucks going to retrieve demolished vehicles when she writes that it was horrible to watch “empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks” of men (Burton 72).

To integrate a quotation into a sentence, omitting words from the source is acceptable if you follow two rules: use ellipses (…) to signal the omission and avoid distorting the source’s meaning. It is also acceptable to adjust capitalization and grammar provided that you follow two rules: use brackets [ ] to signal the change and, again, avoid distorting the source’s meaning.

Lessig argues against the position that “[f]ile sharing threatens… the ability of creators to earn a fair return from their creativity” (Lessig 203).

When he wrote his book, nearly everyone in the music industry felt that “[f]ile sharing threaten[ed]…the ability of creators to earn a fair return from their creativity” (Lessig 203).

What Punctuation Should I use with Quotations?

Place quotation marks at the start and the end of direct quotations unless the quotation is long enough to justify the use of the block quotation format (four lines or more).

The in-text, or parenthetical, citation shows your reader where your quotation or paraphrase ends. In-text citations are inserted after the final quotation marks. An in-text citation is not found in the words that you are quoting; it is something you create to identify the source for your readers.

If the quotation immediately follows a verb capturing the act of expression, place a comma after the verb:

As the author wrote, “A free culture has been our past, but it will only be our future if we change the path we are on right now” (Lessig 287).

Under limited circumstances, a colon (:) can be used to introduce a quotation. The quotation must re-identify or restate a phrase or idea that immediately precedes the colon.

Lessig reached a radical conclusion about copyrighted material: “It should become free if it is not worth $1 to you” (251).

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8.4: Citations and Plagiarism

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is using someone else's work without giving him or her credit. "Work" includes text, ideas, images, videos, and audio. In the academic world, you must follow these rules:

- When you use the exact words, you must use quotation marks and provide a citation.
- When you put the information into your own words, you must provide a citation.
- When you use an image, audio, or video created by someone else, you must provide a citation.

Plagiarism could happen with a sentence, a paragraph, or even just a word! For example, Stephen Colbert, of the television show *The Colbert Report*, made up the word "truthiness," meaning something that sounds like it should be true. If you say in a paper something has a ring of "truthiness," you should cite Colbert. If someone else's words catch your interest, you should cite them.



Figure 8.4.1 Colbert in May 2009

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Penalties can range from failing the assignment to failing the course to being expelled.

Writing at Work



Figure 8.4.2 Jonah Lehrer

Plagiarism isn't just a problem in the academic world. There are many examples of people who plagiarized at work and faced severe consequences. **Jonah Lehrer** (https://tinyurl.com/yb2ah7me), an author and staff writer for *The New Yorker*, fabricated quotes and copied previous work for his book *Imagine*. Once his plagiarism was revealed, his book was removed from bookstores and he was forced to resign from his job.

Why Should I Cite?

Whenever you use sources, it is important that you document them completely and accurately. You make your work more useful to your reader through complete and careful documentation, so you should think of documentation as essential rather than as an "add on" tacked on at the last minute.

When asked why you should cite your sources, many students reply, "So you don't get accused of plagiarizing." It is true that you must provide citations crediting others' work so as to avoid plagiarism, but scholars use citations for many other (and more important!) reasons:

- To make your arguments more credible. You want to use the very best evidence to support your claims. For example, if you are citing a statistic about a disease, you should be sure to use a credible, reputable source like the World Health Organization or Centers for Disease Control (CDC). When you tell your reader the statistic comes from such a source, she will know to trust it– and thereby trust your argument more.

- To show you've done your homework. You want to make it clear to your audience that you've researched your subject, tried hard to inform yourself, and know what you are talking about. As you dive deeper into your research, you will probably find certain authors are experts on the topic and are mentioned in most of the articles and books. You should read these experts' works and incorporate them into your paper.
- To build a foundation for your paper. Great breakthroughs in scholarship are accomplished by building on the earlier, groundbreaking work of others. For example, Isaac Newton's law of universal gravitation would not have been possible without Johannes Kepler's law of planetary motion. What articles, books, and texts inspired you to create your argument? You are not the first person to ever consider this issue. You want to provide references to the works which led to your thesis.
- To allow your readers to find the sources for themselves. Someone interested in your topic may be inspired to read some of the sources you used to write your paper. The citation within the paper tells readers what part of your argument is addressed by a particular source, and the full citation in the bibliography provides the information needed to track down that original research.

Citing sources doesn't just save you from plagiarizing, it also adds credibility to your arguments, helps you build a strong foundation for your work, and helps your readers locate more information about your topic.

How Can I Avoid Plagiarism?

Don't procrastinate. Students who rush make careless mistakes, such as forgetting to include a particular citation or not having all the information needed for documentation. Students under pressure may also make poor choices, such as not documenting sources and hoping the professor won't notice. Your professor will notice.

Take careful notes. You need to be very clear in your notes whether you are writing down word-for-word what you found somewhere else, or if you are jotting down your own idea. You should take down all the information you will need to create your citations.

Cite your sources. Whenever you quote, paraphrase, summarize, or share an unusual fact, tell your reader where the information came from.

Document at the same time you draft. As you begin drafting, prepare a correctly formatted Works Cited page that captures the information also needed for in-text citations. Insert citations into your paper as you are writing it. If you cite-as-you-go, you won't consume time looking up information all over again at the end, and you make it less likely that you will misidentify or omit necessary documentation.

Get comfortable with the required citation style. The most commonly used citation styles are APA, MLA, and Chicago/Turabian. While they share many similarities, they also have differing requirements about what and when to cite. In English, we use MLA style.



Figure 8.4.3 Citations

Ask your professor. If you're not sure about citing something, check with your instructor. Learning when to cite, how to lead-in to sources, and how to integrate them into your sentence structures and ideas takes place over time and with feedback.

What is Common Knowledge?

Common knowledge is information that is accepted and known so widely you do not need to cite it:

- **Common sayings or cliches**. Examples: Curiosity killed the cat. Ignorance is bliss.
- **Facts that can be easily verified**. As you are conducting your research on a topic, you will see the same facts repeated over and over. Example: You are writing a paper on presidential elections, and you want to mention that Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980. Although you might not have known this fact before your research, you have seen it multiple times and no one ever argues about it.

- **Facts that you can safely assume your readers know**. Examples: Richmond is the capital of Virginia. The North won the U.S. Civil War. Fish breathe using gills.

Not all facts are common knowledge. You will still need to cite:

- **Facts that surprise you or your reader**. Example: Michelangelo was shorter than average (Hughes and Elam 4).
- **Facts that include statistics or other numbers**. Example: As of June 2009, forty-two states had laws that explicitly ban gay marriage, and six states have legalized it (U.S. Department of Labor).
- **If you use the exact words of another writer, even if the content could be considered common knowledge**. Example: Lincoln's first campaign dates to "1832, when he ran as a Whig for the Illinois state legislature from the town of New Salem and lost" (Lincoln 451).

Tip

Common knowledge can be course-specific. For example, the number of bones in the leg could be considered common knowledge in an athletic training course. However, if you are using that fact in an English paper, you cannot assume your professor would have that knowledge, and you would need to cite it. Deciding if something is common knowledge is tricky and can vary depending on your course and your topic. When in doubt, ask your professor for advice.

What is MLA?

Different fields prefer different methods of documenting the use of sources. In English, the citation style is called MLA, from the initials of the Modern Language Association. When it comes to documentation, learn to notice and apply the particular style that you are asked to use. Brown Library has online citation guides (http://infoguides.virginiawestern.edu/citations) for several styles.

Writing at Work

Citations aren't just for research papers and schoolwork. Any time you use outside sources, including in a speech or PowerPoint presentation, you should cite your sources. When you give credit to others, your work is strengthened!

How Do I Format References?

References record bibliographic information about sources that have been cited in the text. The necessary information is author, title, and details about publication (when the source was published and who published it). The order of the information and the punctuation, abbreviation, and spacing conventions may differ depending on the documentation style, but the purpose of the references will be the same: to allow a reader to easily track down your sources.

Basic MLA style reference for a book:

Author(s). *Title of the Book.* Publisher, Date.

Example:

Burton, Katelyn. *The Best Librarian in the World*. Oxford Press, 2016.

Basic MLA style reference for a journal article:

Author(s)."Title of the Article." *Title of the Journal*, Volume number, Issue number. Date including month or season if you have it, Page numbers. *Database Title*, URL/Link to the article.

Example:

Burton, Katelyn. "Librarians Are Amazing." *Library Journal*, vol. 22, no. 3. Spring 2016, pp. 7-28. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/61245.

Basic MLA style reference for a webpage:

Author(s)."Title of the Webpage." *Title of the Website*, Date including day and month if you have it, URL/Link to the webpage.

Example:

Burton, Katelyn. "Tips for Citing Sources." *Brown Library Website*, 14 June 2016, http://www.virginiawestern.edu/library/index.php.

What Should I Do if my Source Differs from the Basic Pattern for a Reference

The basic pattern is easy to recognize, but it is impossible to memorize all the variations for different sources. Some sources are available online; some sources are audiovisual instead of print; some sources have translators and editors. These and other details find their way into references. Learn to consult resources that illustrate some of the variations, and then ask yourself which examples seem closest to the source you are trying to document. Creating helpful references for your readers requires attention to both the basic pattern and to details, as well as problem-solving skills and creativity?

Tip

Brown Library has some MLA examples in the **MLA InfoGuide** (https://tinyurl.com/y9fxlz7d). Virginia Commonwealth University maintains a **VCU Writes! website** (https://rampages.us/vcuwrites/) with many more examples of correct MLA citations for different materials. Librarians and Writing Center consultants can also help you create MLA citations for sources that don't follow the basic pattern.

How do I Format In-text Citations?

In-text citations point readers toward a source that a writer is using in her own article or essay. They are placed inside your paragraphs, a position that explains why they are called "in-text." In-text citations are also called parenthetical citations because information identifying the source will be placed inside parentheses (). A writer using MLA style will provide the following in-text information for her readers:

- Author's last name or the name of the organization that created the source, unless it is previously mentioned in the text.
- Page number if available

Example: In the first half of the nineteenth century, people worked hard to spread information about how to prevent disease but did not emphasize how to treat diseases (Murphy 141).

Additional Links

Annotated MLA Sample Paper, (https://tinyurl.com/qzv2afu) Purdue Online Writing Lab

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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9.1: Syntax (Part 1)

Components of a Sentence

A complete sentence consists of a subject and a predicate. The subject is the word or group of words that names the person, place, thing, or idea that the sentence is about, and the predicate consists of the verb and any words that are necessary to complete its meaning. Both subject and predicate are necessary for the sentence to express a complete thought. In a way, every sentence can be compared to a story. Like a story, a sentence must be about someone or something, and that person or thing must have something said about it. In grammatical terms, a complete sentence is an independent clause, which is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate and can stand on its own as a complete thought.

Example 9.1.1:

I could not play in the basketball game.

In this sentence the subject is *I*, and the rest of the sentence is the predicate. Now consider this clause:

Example 9.1.2:

Because I sprained my ankle

Here also the subject is *I*, and there is a predicate, *sprained my ankle*, but this clause is dependent (or subordinate), which means that in order to express its meaning completely it must be joined to an independent clause, as follows:

Example 9.1.3:

Because I sprained my ankle, I could not play in the basketball game.

As this example illustrates, a dependent (or subordinate) clause cannot stand on its own. It must be joined to an independent clause to make its meaning clear. All complete sentences must contain at least one independent clause.

Compound Subjects

A sentence may have more than one person, place, thing, or idea as the subject. When this occurs, the sentence has a compound subject.

Example 9.1.4:

The **students and teachers** left the building when the fire alarm sounded.

In this example, the phrase *students and teachers* is a compound subject.

Prepositional Phrases

A phrase is a group of words that cannot function as a clause because it lacks either a subject, a predicate, or both. A prepositional phrase is a modifying unit that indicates a relationship of some kind (often a relationship of space or time) between the object of the preposition and another word.

Example 9.1.5:

The book was found underneath the couch.

In this example, *underneath the couch* is a prepositional phrase. The object of the preposition is couch, and the preposition *underneath* indicates the relationship between the subject of the sentence (book) and the couch.

Common prepositions include *in*, *on*, *of*, *under*, *near*, *by*, *with*, and *about*.

Participial Phrases

Just as prepositional phrases are built on prepositions, participial phrases are built on either the past or present participle of a verb. They are used as modifiers and usually describe nouns. The participles commonly used in English are the present participle (the –ing form of verbs) and the past participle (the –ed form of regular verbs). Thus, *walking* and *walked* are the present and past participles of the verb to *walk*. A participial phrase consists of the verb participle and any modifiers that go with it.

Example 9.1.6:

walking over rocky ground.

In this example, *walking* is the participle and *over rocky ground* (a prepositional phrase) completes the participial phrase.

Since many participial phrases contain the participle of an action verb, students sometimes confuse a participial phrase with the main verb of a sentence. Look closely, though, and you will see that the action word in a participial phrase is never a complete verb. It is usually only a past or present participle that lacks the helping verb it would need to form a predicate.

Example 9.1.7:

A young man staring at his cell phone bumped into me.

The subject of this sentence is *A young man*, and there may seem to be two predicates, *staring at his cell phone* and *bumped into me*. One of these, however, is only a participial phrase. How can you tell which one? If you remove the first of these two phrases, you get *A young man bumped into me*. This is clearly a complete sentence with a verb, *bumped*, in the past tense. However, if you remove the second phrase, you get *A young man staring at his cell phone*. Is this a complete sentence? Compare it with this:

Example 9.1.8:

A young man **was** staring at his cell phone.

Only when we add was do we have a complete sentence. Why? Because *staring* cannot function as a verb without the helping verb *was* or *is*. So in our original sentence *staring at his cell phone* is a participial phrase used to describe the young man, and the predicate is *bumped into me*.

Exercise 1

Read the following sentences. Underline the subjects, and circle the prepositional phrases:

1. The gym is open until nine o’clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
8. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
9. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
10. His latest invention does not work, but it has inspired the rest of us.

Sentence Patterns

Most English sentences, no matter how long or complicated, make use of the following five basic sentence patterns:

Subject–Verb

Example 9.1.9:

The hammer fell.

The verb [fell] in this type of sentence is *intransitive*, meaning that it does not require a direct object, as the transitive verbs do in patterns 4 and 5. Also, not being a linking verb (see patterns 2 and 3), it does not require a complement. It is possible, then, for a sentence using this pattern to be comprised of only a subject and a verb, as in this example. However, modifiers can always be added, making the sentence longer. Consider this example:

Example 9.1.10:

The hammer fell with great force.

In this example with *great force* is a prepositional phrase added to describe (or modify) how the hammer fell. But because this prepositional phrase is extra material that is not essential to the sentence's structure (the sentence is grammatically complete without it), this longer version is still an example of the basic Subject-Verb sentence pattern.

Subject–Linking Verb–Noun

Example 9.1.11:

The professor is an economist.

This pattern is distinguished by its use of a linking verb. The most common linking verb in English is *to be*, which is conjugated as *is* in this example. In this pattern, the linking verb is used to re-name the subject by linking it to another noun, as in this example where the professor is said to be an economist. This re-naming noun is known as the complement of the linking verb.

Subject–Linking Verb–Adjective

Example 9.1.12:

The athlete is tall.

As in pattern 2, this pattern uses a linking verb (*is*) to connect the subject with a complement, but here the complement is an adjective (*tall*) that describes the subject.

Subject–Verb–Direct Object

Example 9.1.13:

The pitcher threw the ball.

The verb in this pattern is transitive: it requires that the action be performed on something or someone. In other words, something or someone receives the action of the verb (*threw*, in this example), and that thing or person is the direct object (the ball, in this example).

Subject–Verb–Indirect Object–Direct Object

Example 9.1.14:

The lobbyists gave the Congressmen money.

In this pattern, the transitive verb takes both a direct object and an indirect object. In this example, the direct object is *money* (because money is the thing that was given) and the indirect object is *Congressmen*. The indirect object identifies to whom (or which) or for whom (or which) the action is done. The indirect object is usually a noun or pronoun, and in this pattern it comes before the direct object. Usually a sentence using this pattern can be re-written in a form that places the indirect object in a

prepositional phrase that comes after the direct object, thus: *The lobbyists gave money to the Congressmen*. Here the indirect object, the *Congressmen*, becomes the object of the preposition *to*.

Compound Sentences: Joining Clauses with Coordination

A compound sentence consists of two independent clauses joined by coordination. Coordination connects the two clauses in a way that emphasizes both clauses equally. Consider these two sentences:

Original sentences: I spent my entire paycheck last week. I am staying home this weekend.

In their current form, these sentences contain two separate ideas that may or may not be related. Am I staying home this week because I spent my paycheck, or is there another reason for my lack of enthusiasm to leave the house? To indicate a relationship between the two ideas, we can use the coordinating conjunction *so*:

Revised sentence: I spent my entire paycheck last week, so I am staying home this weekend.

The revised sentence illustrates that the two ideas are connected. Notice that the sentence retains two independent clauses (*I spent my entire paycheck; I am staying home this weekend*) because each can stand alone as a complete idea.

Coordinating Conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction is a word that joins two independent clauses. The most common coordinating conjunctions *are for, and, nor, but, or, yet*, and *so*. Note that a comma precedes the coordinating conjunction when it joins two independent clauses.

Independent Clause	Coordinating Conjunction	Independent Clause	Revised Sentence
I will not be attending the dance.	for (indicates a reason or cause)	I have no one to go with.	I will not be attending the dance, for I have no one to go with.
Posters announcing the dance are everywhere.	and (joins two ideas)	Teachers have talked about it in class.	Posters announcing the dance are everywhere, and teachers have talked about it in class.
Jessie isn't going to be at the dance.	nor (indicates a negative)	Tom won't be there either.	Jessie isn't going to be at the dance, nor will Tom be there.
The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance.	but, yet (both words indicate a contrast; *but* is more commonly used)	I don't think many people are going.	The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, but I don't think many people are going. OR The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, yet I don't think many people are going.
I might go to the next fundraising event.	or (offers an alternative)	I might donate some money to the cause.	I might go to the next fundraising event, or I might donate some money to the cause.
Buying a new dress is expensive.	so (indicates a result)	By staying home I will save money.	Buying a new dress is expensive, so by staying home I will save money.

tip

To help you remember the seven coordinating conjunctions, think of the acronym **FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**. Remember that when you use a coordinating conjunction to connect independent clauses, a comma should precede the conjunction. (Exception: the comma is sometimes left out when the clauses are short and closely related. Example: John drove and I gave directions.)

Conjunctive Adverbs

Another method of joining two independent clauses with related and equal ideas is to use a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon. Like coordinating conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs can join independent clauses and indicate a particular relationship between them, but conjunctive adverbs create a stronger break between the clauses than coordinating conjunction do. Read the following sentences:

Original sentences: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics. She trains every day.

Since these sentences contain two equal and related ideas, they may be joined using a conjunctive adverb. Now, read the revised sentence:

Revised sentence: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics; therefore, she trains every day.

The revised sentence explains the relationship between Bridget's desire to take part in the next Olympics and her daily training. Notice that the conjunctive adverb comes after a semicolon that separates the two clauses and is followed by a comma.

The table below lists common conjunctive adverbs and demonstrates their function.

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Addition	also, furthermore, moreover, besides	Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.
Comparison	similarly, likewise	Recycling aluminum cans is beneficial to the environment; similarly, reusing plastic bags and switching off lights reduces waste.
Contrast	instead, however, conversely	Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take the train.
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; indeed, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, thus	I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then	Tim crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.

? Exercise 2

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using either a coordinating conjunction or a conjunctive adverb:

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor's building. He owns several cats and a parrot.
2. New legislation prevents drivers from sending or reading text messages while driving. Many people continue to use their phones illegally.
3. The coroner concluded that the young man had taken a lethal concoction of drugs. By the time his relatives found him, nothing could be done.
4. . Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Ashley carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car key, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip. He called the manufacturer for advice.

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9.2: Syntax (Part 2)

Complex Sentences: Joining Clauses with Subordination

Subordination joins two sentences with related ideas by combining them into an independent clause (a complete sentence) and a dependent clause (a construction that relies on the independent clause, also called the main clause, to complete its meaning). While coordination allows a writer to give equal weight to the two ideas that are being combined, subordination enables a writer to emphasize one idea over the other. Take a look at the following sentences:

Original sentences: Tracy stopped to help the injured man. She would be late for work.

To illustrate that these two ideas are related, we can rewrite them as a single sentence using the subordinating conjunction *even though.*

Revised sentence: Even though Tracy would be late for work, she stopped to help the injured man.

In the revised version, we now have an independent clause (*she stopped to help the injured man*) that stands as a complete sentence, and a dependent clause (*even though Tracy would be late for work*) that is subordinate to the main clause. Notice that the revised sentence emphasizes the fact that Tracy stopped to help the injured man, rather than the fact that she would be late for work. We could also write the sentence this way:

Revised sentence: Tracy stopped to help the injured man even though she would be late for work.

The meaning remains the same in both sentences, with the subordinating conjunction *even though* introducing the dependent clause.

tip

To punctuate sentences correctly, look at the position of the main clause and the subordinate clause. If a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, use a comma. If the subordinate clause follows the main clause, no punctuation is required. Exception: subordinate clauses that begin with conjunctions that indicate concession (see table below) are sometimes preceded by a comma, even when they follow the main clause.

Subordinating Conjunctions and Adverb

Clauses A subordinating conjunction is a word that joins a subordinate (dependent) clause to a main (independent) clause. Since the resulting subordinate clause modifies the verb in the main clause, the subordinate unit is called an adverb clause.

Function	Subordinating Conjunction	Example
Concession	although, while, though, whereas, even though	Sarah completed her report even though she had to stay late to get it done.
Condition	if, unless, until	Until we know what is causing the problem, we will not be able to fix it.
Manner (used to make a comparison)	as if, as though	The students in the conference room stopped talking at once, as though they had been stunned into silence.
Place	where, wherever	Where the trail split, our guide stopped, unsure of which route to take.
Reason	because, since, so that, in order that	Because the air conditioning was turned up so high, everyone in the office wore sweaters.
Time	after, before, while, once, when, as, as soon as	After the meeting had finished, we all went to lunch.

? Exercise 3

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a subordinating conjunction:

1. A snow storm disrupted traffic all over the east coast. There will be long delivery delays this week.
2. My neighbor had his television volume turned up too high. I banged on his door and asked him to keep the noise down.
3. Jessica prepared the potato salad and the sautéed vegetables. Ashley marinated the chicken.
4. Romeo poisons himself. Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

Key Takeaways

- Coordination and subordination join two sentences with related ideas.
- Coordination joins sentences with related and equal ideas, whereas subordination joins sentences with related but unequal ideas.
- Sentences can be coordinated using either a coordinating conjunction and a comma or a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon.
- Subordinate adverb clauses are made by the use of a subordinating conjunction.
- In a sentence with an adverb clause, a comma is generally used to separate the main clause from the dependent clause if the dependent clause is placed at the beginning of the sentence.

Relative Pronouns and Adjective Clauses

While an adverb clause modifies the verb in an independent clause, an adjective clause modifies a noun. The modified noun may function in the sentence in any number of ways. It may be a subject, complement, direct object, or the object of a preposition.

Consider the following:

Original Sentences: Jill and her friends camped near a silver mine. The mine had been abandoned for fifty years.

The second sentence modifies or tells about the silver mine, which is the object of a preposition (*near*) in the first sentence. We can turn the second sentence into a subordinate adjective clause and attach it to the first sentence.

Combined Sentences: Jill and her friends camped near a silver mine **that had been abandoned for fifty years.**

The adjective clause is highlighted in yellow. *That* replaces the original subject of the second sentence (*The mine*) to form a subordinate adjective clause, and the clause is then attached to the first sentence, which becomes the main clause. The relative pronoun in this example is *that*. Like subordinating conjunctions, relative pronouns are used to make a clause dependent (or subordinate). But unlike subordinating conjunctions, relative pronouns take the place of another word, just as other pronouns do. And unlike adverb clauses, which can be located either before or after a main clause, an adjective clause must be located immediately after the noun that it modifies. If this rule is not followed, the adjective clause becomes a misplaced modifier (see Misplaced Modifiers). The following words can all function as relative pronouns: *who, whom, whose, which, that, when, where*.

Restrictive and Nonrestrictive Adjective Clauses

An adjective clause is restrictive if it is essential for identifying (restricting) the noun that it modifies. A nonrestrictive clause may be important to the sentence, but it is not essential for identifying the noun. This distinction is important because nonrestrictive clauses must be set off from the main clause with commas. Consider these examples:

- My brother Frank, **who ran cross country in high school**, beat everybody in the foot race.
- A young man **who ran cross country in high school** beat everybody in the foot race.

Both these sentences contain the same adjective clause (*who ran cross country in high school*), but in the first example the clause modifies a subject identified with a proper noun (*Frank*) and the designation *my brother*. Consequently, the adjective clause is not essential to the identification of the subject. It is nonrestrictive and set off with two commas, one before the clause and one after it.

In the second example, the subject is simply “A young man.” Consequently, the adjective clause is necessary to the identification of who this particular young man is. The clause is restrictive and is not set off with commas (see comma use).

The table below illustrates relative pronouns and how they function to create adjective clauses.

Function of Relative Pronoun	Relative Pronoun	Example (with adjective clause highlighted)

Function of Relative Pronoun	Relative Pronoun	Example (with adjective clause highlighted)
Takes the place of a noun referring to people.	who	My roommate, **who is from Brazil**, is majoring in physics
Takes the place of a direct object referring to people.	whom	The band hired Slim Swayze, **whom the lead singer had known in Ogden**, to play the harmonica. Notes: *Whom* is generally used only in formal writing. *Who* is often used in its place in colloquial English. When *whom* is used in a restrictive clause, it may be deleted from the sentence. Example: The band leader hired a musician **whom he had known in Ogden** to play the harmonica.
Takes the place of a noun referring to things. Generally used in nonrestrictive clauses.	which	*The Old Man and the Sea*, **which I read last year**, tells the story of a fisherman in the Gulf of Mexico.
Takes the place of a noun referring to people or things. Used only in restrictive clauses.	that	The tourist blundered down a street **that seemed to lead nowhere**. Note: When that is used to replace a direct object, it may be deleted from the sentence. Example: The tacos **that I ate** were delicious.
Creates a clause that modifies a particular time.	when	Audrey and I recalled the time **when we played together on the volleyball team**.
Creates a clause that modifies a particular place	where	Joe spent spring break in North Carolina, **where his cousins live**.
Indicates a condition of ownership between the modified noun and the subject of the adjective clause.	whose	An elderly woman **whose car had been stolen** sat on a bench in the police station.

? Exercise 4

Use coordination and/or subordination to combine each set of simple sentences into a single sentence.

1. 1. Heroin is an extremely addictive drug. Thousands of heroin addicts die each year.
2. Shakespeare's writing is still relevant today. He wrote about timeless themes. These themes include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.
3. Gay marriage was first legal in the U.S in the six states of Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Other states followed their example.
4. Prewriting is a vital stage of the writing process. Prewriting helps you organize your ideas. Types of prewriting include outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping.
5. Mitch Bancroft is a famous writer. He also serves as a governor on the local school board. Mitch's two children attend the school.

Common Errors: Fragments and Run-ons

Fragments

A fragment occurs when a group of words that does not form a complete sentence is punctuated as though it is a complete sentence. Here are three common types of fragments and ways to correct them:

The fragment may lack a predicate because the verb is incomplete:

Fragment: The runners staggering in the 100-degree heat.

Complete sentence: The runners **were** staggering in the 100-degree heat.

> Note
>
> The present participle *staggering* is not a complete verb without the helping verb were. See Progressive Verb Tenses.

The fragment may be a dependent (subordinate) clause that needs to be attached to an independent clause:

Fragment: Unless she could earn the money for tuition.

Complete sentence: Unless she could earn the money for tuition, she would have to drop out of school.

> Note
>
> The fragment here is an adverb clause and does not express a complete thought unless it is attached to an independent clause. See Complex Sentences.

Fragment: Which was the best thing to do.

Complete sentence: My sister decided to sell the house, which was the best thing to do.

> Note
>
> The fragment here is an adjective clause and does not express a complete thought unless it is attached to an independent clause. See Complex Sentences.

The fragment may be a subject with modifiers that needs a linking verb.

Fragment: Doubt and mistrust everywhere, fogging the minds of managers and workers alike.

Complete Sentence: Doubt and mistrust **were** everywhere, fogging the minds of managers and workers alike.

> Note
>
> Were supplies the needed linking verb in this sentence (see Sentence Patterns). Fogging may seem like a verb, but it is only part of a participial phrase and cannot be a complete verb without a helping verb. See Components of a Sentence.

Run-on Sentences

Sentences with two or more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as run-on sentences. A run-on sentence may be either a fused sentence or a comma splice.

Fused sentence: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

Notice that there are two sentences here, one about a family of foxes, which ends with the word *shed*, and another about the young foxes. These two sentences are simply run together without any punctuation, coordination, or subordination, creating a fused sentence.

Comma splice: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

Here the break between the two sentences is marked with only a comma. Since a comma is not a legitimate way to connect independent clauses, this creates a comma splice.

Correcting Run-ons with Punctuation

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation. For example, adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences. Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses.

Run-on (fused sentence): The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Corrected sentence: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a conjunctive adverb to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the conjunctive adverb and follow it with a comma (see Compound Sentences).

Run-on (comma splice): The project was put on hold, we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Corrected sentence: The project was put on hold; however, we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Coordinating conjunctions (remember FANBOYS) and subordination, discussed in the sections on Compound Sentences and Complex Sentences, can also be used to fix run-ons.

? Exercise 5

Use what you have learned so far to identify common sentence errors. Label each sentence as a fragment (**F**), a run-on sentence (**R**), or a correct, complete sentence (**C**) in the space before each. Write corrected sentences on the lines below fragments and run-ons.

_____ Being absent hurts a student's grade, he or she should be in class every day.

_____

_____ Having been interested in science most of her life, she did well in Biology 101.

_____

_____ Hurry with your breakfast, you will miss the bus.

_____

_____ Several students had the right answer; however, most of them failed the exam.

_____

_____ Several girls expressed concerns about course selections, therefore, changes were made.

_____

_____ Jim practiced the violin daily, he wanted to excel in music.

_____

_____ The child loved his mother, but he did not want to obey her.

_____

_____ I had a severe case of the flu last year.

_____

_____ And had spent the first three days of my illness in bed.

_____

_____ Because I was sick of my bed and decided I'd lie on the sofa and watch television.

_____

_____ Only getting up to take care of the necessities of life.

_____

_____ Then I must have fallen asleep.

_____

_____ When I was suddenly conscious again.

_____

_____ The wind howled outside, the house was damp and chilly, and my fever soared.

_____

_____ Then somewhere in the blackness ahead of me, I saw a spot of light.

_____

_____ What has happened to the economy, many Americans want the answer to this question.

_____

_____ He was late for his appointment, then he forgot to bring his briefcase with him.

_____

_____ Voting is a privilege, this privilege should not be taken for granted.

_____

_____ Be ready for any emergency, plan ahead.

_____

_____ Because I was sure that I had died.

_____

_____ A friend is always willing to help, friendship is invaluable.

_____

_____ Although he was sick, James came to class.

_____

_____ Running a temperature between 102 and 107.

_____

_____ We were excited about the game, and we won.

_____

_____ Be careful with your answer, your grade could be affected.

_____

Key Takeaways

- A sentence is complete when it contains both a subject and verb (predicate). A complete sentence makes sense on its own.
- Every sentence must have a subject, which usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. A subject may be a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun.
- A compound subject contains more than one noun.
- A prepositional phrase describes, or modifies, another word in the sentence but cannot be the subject of a sentence.
- A verb is often an action word that indicates what the subject is doing. Verbs may be action verbs (transitive or intransitive), linking verbs, or helping verbs.
- Remembering the five basic sentence patterns is useful when correcting grammar errors.
- Fragments and run-on sentences are two common errors in sentence construction.
- Fragments can be corrected by adding a missing subject or verb or combining a dependent clause with an independent clause.
- Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding appropriate punctuation or using coordination or subordination.

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9.3: Syntax (Part 3)

Common Errors: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Misplaced Modifiers

When a participial phrase, prepositional phrase, or other modifying unit is not placed next to the noun it describes, the resulting error is called a misplaced modifier. Consider these examples:

- **Incorrect**: Turning on the kitchen light, the woman surprised the thief in her nightgown.
  Correct: Turning on the kitchen light, the woman in her nightgown surprised the thief.
- **Incorrect**: They bought a kitten for my brother called Shadow.
  Correct: They bought a kitten called Shadow for my brother.
- **Incorrect**: The patient was referred to the physician with stomach pains.
  Correct: The patient with stomach pains was referred to the physician.

tip

Simple modifiers like only, almost, just, nearly, and barely often get used incorrectly because writers often put them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Tyler almost found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

Repaired: Tyler found almost fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

How do you almost find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer.

Exercise 6

Rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers:

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called “Speed Racer.”
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn’t drink or smoke.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier (or simply a *dangler*) is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, then the modifier is said to dangle.

Incorrect: Riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by.

Correct: As Jane was riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by.

In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader.

Incorrect: Walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: As Jonas was walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was walking home at night.

In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

Incorrect: To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

Correct: If we want to win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. *Who* wants to win the spelling bee? *We* do.

tip

Following these steps will help you correct a dangling modifier:

Look for a modifying phrase at the beginning of your sentence and underline the noun that immediately follows it. The example below opens with a participial phrase, highlighted in yellow:

Example: **Painting for three hours at night**, the kitchen was finally finished.

If the modifying phrase does not describe the underlined noun, then you have a dangler. In this example, the kitchen is the room that was painted, but who did the painting? A noun referring to that person should immediately follow the participial phrase:

Correction: Painting for three hours at night, **Maggie** finally finished the kitchen.

Since Maggie did the painting, her name follows the participial phrase.

Exercise 7

Rewrite the following the sentences to correct the dangling modifiers:

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Exercise 9.3.8

Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers:

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Key Takeaways

- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers distract the reader.
- There are several effective ways to identify and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

Parallelism

Parallelism is the use of similar structure in related words, clauses, or phrases. It creates a sense of rhythm and balance within a sentence. As readers, we often correct faulty parallelism—a lack of parallel structure—intuitively because an unbalanced sentence sounds awkward and poorly constructed. Read the following sentences aloud:

Faulty parallelism: Kelly had to iron, do the washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Faulty parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and to have good eyesight.

Faulty parallelism: Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. Although they are factually correct, the construction is clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used. In the second and third examples, the writer begins each sentence by using a noun (coordination, jeans), but ends with a phrase (to have good eyesight, wearing a suit). Now read the same three sentences that have correct parallelism.

Correct parallelism: Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Correct parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight.

Correct parallelism: Ali prefers wearing jeans to wearing a suit.

When these sentences are written using parallel structure, they sound more aesthetically pleasing because they are balanced. Repetition of grammatical construction also minimizes the work the reader has to do to decode the sentence.

tip

A simple way to check for parallelism in your writing is to make sure you have paired nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, and so on. Underline each element in a sentence and check that the corresponding element uses the same grammatical form.

Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

When you connect two phrases or clauses using a coordinating conjunction *(for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*), make sure that the same grammatical structure is used on each side of the conjunction. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like to listen to music and talking to friends on the phone.

Correct parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like listening to music and talking to friends on the phone.

The first sentence uses two different verb forms (to listen, talking). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (and) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series.

Faulty parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lowering workers' wages.

Correct parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lower workers' wages.

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (reduce, cut) and a third item that uses a different verb form (lowering). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

? Exercise 9

Revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using coordinating conjunctions:

1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and to play his guitar on weekends.
2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet.
4. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer email queries.

Creating Parallelism Using Than or As

When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure. Comparing two items without using parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being compared. Comparisons frequently use the words than or as, and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: Swimming in the ocean is more difficult than a pool.

Correct parallelism: Swimming in the ocean is more difficult than swimming in a pool.

In the first sentence, the elements before the comparison word (than) are not equal to the elements after the comparison word. It appears that the writer is comparing an action (swimming) with a noun (a pool). In the second sentence, the writer uses the same grammatical construction to create a parallel structure. This clarifies that an action is being compared with another action.

To correct some instances of faulty parallelism, it may be necessary to add or delete words in a sentence.

Faulty parallelism: A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as going for a run.

Correct parallelism: Going for a brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as going for a run.

Correct parallelism: A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as a run.

? Exercise 10

Revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using *than* or *as*:

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.
3. The firefighter spoke more of his childhood than he talked about his job.
4. Indian cuisine is far tastier than the food of Great Britain.
5. Jim's opponent was as tall as Jim and he carried far more weight.

Creating Parallelism Using Correlative Conjunctions

A correlative conjunction is a paired conjunction that connects two equal parts of a sentence and shows the relationship between them. Common correlative conjunctions include the following:

either…or

not only…but also

neither…nor

whether…or

rather…than

both…and

Correlative conjunctions should follow the same grammatical structure to create a parallel sentence. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: We can neither wait for something to happen nor can we take evasive action.

Correct parallelism: We can neither wait for something to happen nor take evasive action.

When using a correlative conjunction, the words, phrases, or clauses following each part should be parallel. In the first sentence, the construction of the second part of the sentence does not match the construction of the first part. In the second sentence, omitting needless words and matching verb constructions create a parallel structure. Sometimes, rearranging a sentence corrects faulty parallelism.

Faulty parallelism: It was both a long movie and poorly written.

Correct parallelism: The movie was both long and poorly written.

tip

To see examples of parallelism in use, read some of the great historical speeches by rhetoricians such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Notice how they use parallel structures to emphasize important points and to create a smooth, easily understandable oration.

Exercise 11

Revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using correlative conjunctions:

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and has a racing bike.
2. The movie not only contained lots of action, but also it offered an important lesson.
3. My current job is neither exciting nor is it meaningful.
4. Jason would rather listen to his father than be taking advice from me.
5. We are neither interested in buying a vacuum cleaner nor do we want to utilize your carpet cleaning service.

Key Takeaways

- Parallelism creates a sense of rhythm and balance in writing by using the same grammatical structure to express equal ideas.
- Faulty parallelism occurs when elements of a sentence are not balanced, causing the sentence to sound clunky and awkward.
- Parallelism may be created by connecting two clauses or making a list using coordinating conjunctions; by comparing two items using than or as; or by connecting two parts of a sentence using correlative conjunctions.

Appositives

An appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

Original sentences: Harland Sanders began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930. He is Colonel Sanders or “the Colonel.”

Revised sentence: Harland Sanders, “the Colonel,” began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930.

In the revised sentence, “the Colonel” is an appositive because it renames Harland Sanders. To combine two sentences using an appositive, drop the subject and verb from the sentence that renames the noun and turn it into a phrase. Note that in the previous example, the appositive is positioned immediately after the noun it describes. An appositive must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers.

Appositive after noun: Scott, a poorly trained athlete, was not expected to win the race.

Appositive before noun: A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race.

Unlike adjective clauses and participial phrases, which may be restrictive or nonrestrictive, appositives are always nonrestrictive, and thus they are always set off by commas. A comma is placed both before and after the appositive.

Exercise 12

Rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using any of the techniques you have learned in this section:

1. Baby sharks are called pups. Pups can be born in one of three ways.
2. The Pacific Ocean is the world’s largest ocean. It extends from the Arctic in the north to the Southern Ocean in the south.
3. Michael Phelps won eight gold medals in the 2008 Olympics. He is a champion swimmer.
4. Ashley introduced her colleague Dan to her husband, Jim. She speculated that the two of them would have a lot in common.
5. Cacao is harvested by hand. It is then sold to chocolate-processing companies at the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange.

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9.4: Verbs (Part 1)

Verb Forms

You must always use a verb in every sentence you write. Verbs are parts of speech that indicate actions or states of being. The most basic sentence structure is a subject followed by a verb. Correct use of verb tenses and forms is very important in English. Verbs carry much of the main meaning of the sentence, and verb suffixes and auxiliaries indicate the time. Verbs are the powerhouses of our language.

There are two main types of verb errors. Try to distinguish between the two types. Verb Form is an error where the tense has been incorrectly formed. Verb Tense is an error where an incorrect tense has been chosen for the meaning. Although the grammar of verbs is very complex in English, every student can easily learn the basic grammar and be able to use verbs correctly.

English verbs have five forms:

Base	Past	Past Participle	Progressive/Continuous	3rd Person Singular
Regular WALK	WALKED	WALKED	WALKING	WALKS
Irregular EAT	ATE	EATEN	EATING	EATS

Some Verb Form Rules to Know	Examples
Infinitive = to + base form	to run, to hide, to show
Modal = modal + base form	can run, could hide, should show
Do Support = do, does, did + base form	did run, doesn't hide, did show
Progressive = "to be" + base + ing	am running, was hiding, are doing
Perfect = have, has, had + past participle	have run, has hidden, had shown
Passive = "to be" + past participle	is built, was written, are being done

Active Forms of the 12 English Tenses of the regular verb "WALK"

	PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
SIMPLE	WALKED	WALK/S	WILL WALK
PROGRESSIVE	WAS /WERE WALKING	AM/IS/ARE WALKING	WILL BE WALKING
PERFECT	HAD WALKED	HAS/HAVE WALKED	WILL HAVE WALKED
PERFECT-PROGRESSIVE	HAD BEEN WALKING	HAD BEEN WALKING	WILL HAVE BEEN WALKING

Simple Verb Tenses

Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place. The action could be in the past, present, or future. These are called Time Frames.

Past	← Present →	Future
Yesterday I jumped.	Today I jump.	Tomorrow I will jump.

Simple present verbs are used in the following situations:

When the action takes place now

Example 9.4.1:

I drink the water greedily.

When the action is something that happens regularly

Example 9.4.2:

I always cross my fingers for good luck.

When describing things that are generally true.

Example 9.4.3:

College tuition is very costly.

When it is he, she, or it doing the present tense action, remember to add -s, or -es to the end of the verb or to change the y to -ies.

Simple past verbs are used when the action has already taken place and is now finished:

- I washed my uniform last night.
- I asked for more pie.
- I coughed loudly last night.

When the action is something done in the past, remember to add -d or -ed to the end of regular verbs, regardless of the subject.

Simple future verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:

- I will work late tomorrow.
- I will kiss my boyfriend when I see him.
- I will erase the board after class.

Going to can also be added to the main verb to make it future tense:

- I am *going to* go to work tomorrow

Exercise 13

Complete the following sentences by adding the verb in the correct simple tense:

1. Please do not (erase, erased, will erase) what I have written on the board.
2. They (dance, danced, will dance) for hours after the party was over.
3. Harrison (wash, washed, will wash) his laundry after several weeks had passed.
4. Yesterday Mom (ask, asked, will ask) me about my plans for college.
5. I (bake, baked, will bake) several dozen cookies for tomorrow's bake sale.

tip

Remember, if you have a compound subject like Marie and Jennifer, think of the subject as they to determine the correct verb form.

EX: Marie and Jennifer (they) have a house on Bainbridge Island.

Similarly, single names can be thought of as he, she, or it.

EX: LeBron (he) has scored thirty points so far.

Perfect Verb Tenses

Up to this point, we have studied the three simple verb tenses—simple present, simple past, and simple future. Now we will add three more tenses, which are called perfect tenses. They are present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. A past participle is

often called the -ed form of a verb because it is formed by adding -d or -ed to the base form of regular verbs. Past participles can also end in -t or -en. Keep in mind, however, the past participle is also formed in various other ways for irregular verbs. The past participle can be used to form the present perfect tense.

Review the following basic formula for the present perfect tense:

Subject	+	has or have	+	past participle
I		have		helped

The present perfect tense has a connection with the past and the present.

Use the present perfect tense to describe a continuing situation and to describe an action that has just happened.

Example 9.4.4:

I have worked as a caretaker since June.

This sentence tells us that the subject has worked as a caretaker in the past and is still working as a caretaker in the present.

Example 9.4.5:

Dmitri has just received an award from the Dean of Students.

This sentence tells us that Dmitri has very recently received the award. The word just emphasizes that the action happened very recently.

Study the following basic formula for the past perfect tense:

Subject	+	had	+	past participle
I		had		listened

Example 9.4.6:

The bus had left by the time Theo arrived at the station.

Notice that both actions occurred entirely in the past, but one action occurred before the other. At some time in the past, Theo arrived (simple past tense) at the station, but at some time before that, the bus had left (past perfect).

Look at the following basic formula for the future perfect tense:

Subject	+	will have	+	past participle
I		will have		graduated

The future perfect tense describes an action that started in the past, continues through the present, and will occur in the future. Use the future perfect tense when you anticipate completing an event in the future, but you have not completed it yet.

Example 9.4.7:

You will have forgotten me after you move to London.

Notice that both actions occur in the future, but one action will occur before the other. At some time in the future, the subject (you) will move (future tense) to London, and at some time after that, the subject will have forgotten (future perfect tense) the speaker, me.

Exercise 14

Complete the following sentences by using the correct perfect verb tense for the verb in parentheses:

1. I plan to start a compost bin because I _____ (to want) one for a long time now.
2. My brother told me he _____ (to argue) with his friend about politics.
3. By the time we reach the mountain top the sun _____ (to set).
4. Denise _____ (to walk) several miles in the past three hours.
5. His mother _____ (to offer) to pay him to work in her office.

Progressive Verb Tenses

Progressive verb tenses describe a continuing or unfinished action, such as I am going, I was going, or I will be going.

The present/progressive tense describes an action or state of being that takes place in the present and that continues to take place. To make verbs in the present progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Present tense form of to be	+	present participle
am/is/are		helping

You should use the present progressive tense to describe a planned activity, to describe an activity that is recurring right now, and to describe an activity that is in progress, although not actually occurring at the time of speaking:

Example 9.4.8:

Preeti is starting school on Tuesday.

This sentence describes a planned activity.

Example 9.4.9:

Janetta is getting her teeth cleaned right now.

This sentence describes an activity that is occurring right now.

Example 9.4.10:

I am studying ballet at school.

This sentence describes an activity that is in progress but not actually occurring at the time of speaking.

The past progressive tense describes an action or state of being that took place in the past and that continues to take place in the past time. To make verbs in the past progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Past tense form of to be	+	present participle
was/were		helping

The future progressive tense describes an action or state of being that will take place in the future and that will continue to take place. The action will have started at that future moment, but it will not have finished at that moment. To make verbs in the future progressive tense, combine these parts.

Future tense form of to be	+	present participle
will be		helping

Use the future progressive tense to describe an activity that will be in progress in the future:

Example 9.4.11:

Samantha and I will be dancing in the school play next week.

Tomorrow Agnes will be reading two of her poems.

Exercise 15

Revise the following sentences, written in simple tenses, using the progressive tenses indicated in parentheses.

1. He prepared the food while I watched. (past progressive tense)
2. Jonathan will speak at the conference. (future progressive)
3. Josie traveled to Egypt last July. (past progressive tense)
4. My foot aches, so I know it will rain. (present progressive tense)
5. Micah will talk a lot when I see him. (future progressive) 6. I yawn a lot because I feel tired. (present progressive tense)

Perfect Progressive Verb Tenses

Similar to the present perfect tense, the present perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continues into the present. However, the present perfect progressive is used when you want to stress that the action is ongoing. To make verbs in the present perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Present tense form of to have	+	been	+	present participle
has or have		been		helping

Example 9.4.12:

She has been talking for the last hour.

This sentence indicates that she started talking in the past and is continuing to talk in the present.

Example 9.4.13:

I have been feeling tired lately

This sentence indicates that I started feeling tired in the past, and I continue to feel tired in the present. Instead of indicating time, as in the first sentence, the second sentence uses the adverb *lately*. You can also use the adverb *recently* when using the present perfect progressive tense.

Similar to the past perfect tense, the past perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continued until another time in the past. The past perfect progressive does not continue into the present but stops at a designated moment in the past. To make verbs in the past perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Past tense form of to have	+	been	+	present participle
had		been		helping

Example 9.4.14:

The employees had been talking until their boss arrived.

This sentence indicates that the employees were talking in the past and they stopped talking when their boss arrived, which also happened in the past.

Example 9.4.15:

I had been working all day.

This sentence implies that I was working in the past. The action does not continue into the future, and the sentence implies that the subject stopped working for unstated reasons.

The future perfect progressive tense is rarely used. It is used to indicate an action that will begin in the future and will continue until another time in the future. To make verbs in the future perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Future tense form of to have	+	been	+	present participle
will have		been		helping

Example 9.4.16:

By the end of the meeting, I will have been hearing about mortgages and taxes for eight hours.

This sentence indicates that in the future I will hear about mortgages and taxes for eight hours, but it has not happened yet. It also indicates the action of hearing will continue until the end of the meeting, something that is also in the future.

Passive Verb Forms

The passive voice can be added to verbs, creating a difference in meaning and a difference in grammatical form from the active voice. In a clause with an active verb, the subject is "responsible" for the action described, as in this example:

Example 9.4.17:

Faculty members often forget to lock their office doors when they go to the workroom to print something.

Who did the forgetting? The answer is the faculty members – that is, the subject of the sentence. We know this because the verb is active. Look at the difference in the following example where the verb is passive:

Example 9.4.18:

Professor Mulden's purse was stolen from her office last week when she went to the computer room and forgot to lock her door.

Who did the stealing? Certainly, not Professor Mulden! She was not responsible for the action; she only suffered the effects. We know this because the main verb is in a passive form. To make verbs in the passive, combine the following parts:

Passive of the simple present:

Subject	+	am, is, are	+	past participle
A vote		is		taken

Passive of the simple past:

Subject	+	was, were	+	past participle
A vote		was		taken

Passive of the simple future:

Subject	+	will be	+	past participle
A vote		will be		taken

Passive of the present perfect:

Subject	+	has, have + been	+	past participle
A vote		has been		taken

Passive with modal:

Subject	+	must, could, can + be	+	past participle
A vote		must be		taken

? Exercise 16

Identify the following underlined verbs in sentences as active (A) or passive (P).

1. The jury voted at the end of the trial.
2. Some jurors were told to leave at noon.
3. All the jurors were leaving the building when the reporters came in.
4. My sister Joan has been selected for jury two different times.
5. Were you given any information about that murder case?
6. Not every juror will be needed for the trial next week.

Gerunds and Infinitives

Gerunds

A gerund is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in -ing. Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition. You can use a gerund in the following ways:

As a subject

✓ Example 9.4.19:

Traveling is Cynthia's favorite pastime.

As a direct object

✓ Example 9.4.20:

I enjoy jogging.

As an object of a proposition

✓ Example 9.4.21:

The librarian scolded me for laughing.

Often verbs are followed by gerunds. Examine the following table for examples.

Table of Gerunds and Verbs

Gerund	Verb Followed by a Gerund
moving	Denise considered moving to Paris.
cleaning	I hate cleaning the bathroom.
winning	Nate imagines winning an Oscar one day.
worrying	Mom says she has stopped worrying.

Gerund	Verb Followed by a Gerund
taking	She admitted taking the pumpkin.

Infinitives

An infinitive is a form of a verb that includes the word to and acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

$$\text{to} + \text{verb} = \text{infinitive} \tag{9.4.1}$$

Examples of infinitives include to move, to sleep, to look, to throw, to read, and to sneeze.

Often verbs are followed by infinitives. Examine "Infinitives and Verbs" for examples.

Table of Infinitives and Verbs

Infinitive	Verb Followed by Infinitive
to help	Jessica offered to help her move.
to arrive	Mick expects to arrive early.
to win	Sunita wants to win the writing contest.
to close	He forgot to close the curtains.
to eat	She likes to eat late.

You may wonder which verbs can be followed by gerunds and which verbs can be followed by infinitives. With the following verbs, you can use either a gerund or an infinitive.

Table of Infinitives and Gerunds Verbs

Base Form of Verb	Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds and Infinitives
begin	1. John began crying. 2. John began to cry.
hate	1. Marie hated talking on the phone. 2. Marie hated to talk on the phone.
forget	1. Wendell forgot paying the bills. 2. Wendell forgot to pay the bills.
like	1. I liked leaving messages. 2. I liked to leave messages.
continue	1. He continued listening to the news. 2. He continued to listen to the news.
start	1. I will start recycling immediately. 2. I will start to recycle immediately.
try	1. Mikhail will try climbing the tree. 2. Mikhail will try to climb the tree.
prefer	1. I prefer baking. 2. I prefer to bake.
love	1. Josh loves diving. 2. Josh loves to dive.

Exercise 17

Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct infinitive or gerund:

1. I meant _____ (to kiss, kissing) my kids before they left for school.
2. The children hoped (to go, going) to a restaurant for dinner.
3. Do you intend _____ (to eat, eating) the entire pie?
4. Crystal postponed _____ (to get dressed, getting dressed) for the party.
5. When we finish _____ (to play, playing) this game, we will go home.

Key Takeaways

- Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place.
- Actions could be in the past, present, or future.
- There are six main verb tenses in English: simple present, simple past, simple future, present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect.
- Verbs in English can have active forms and passive forms.
- Verbs can be followed by either gerunds or infinitives.

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9.5: Verbs (Part 2)

Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are helping verbs that are used only with a main verb to help express mood.

The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

Subject	+	modal auxiliary	+	main verb
James		may		call

There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English.

Table of Modal Auxiliaries

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
can	Expresses an ability or possibility	1. I can lift this forty-pound box. (ability) 2. We can embrace green sources of energy. (possibility)
could	Expresses an ability in the past; a present possibility; a past or future permission	1. I could beat you at chess when we were kids. (past ability) 2. We could bake a pie! (present possibility) 3. Could we pick some flowers from the garden? (future permission)
may	Expresses uncertain future action; permission; ask a yes-no question	1. I may attend the concert. (uncertain future action) 2. You may begin the exam. (permission) 3. May I attend the concert? (yesno questions)
might	Expresses uncertain future action	1. I might attend the concert (uncertain future action—same as may)
shall	Expresses intended future action	1. I shall go to the opera. (intended future action)
should	Expresses obligation; ask if an obligation exists	1. I should mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as ought to) 2. Should I call my mother? (asking if an obligation exists)
will	Expresses intended future action; ask a favor; ask for information	1. I will get an A in this class. (intended future action) 2. Will you buy me some chocolate? (favor) 3. Will you be finished soon? (information)

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
would	States a preference; request a choice politely; explain an action; introduce habitual past actions	1. I would like the steak, please. (preference) 2. Would you like to have breakfast in bed? (request a choice politely) 3. I would go with you if I didn't have to babysit tonight. (explain an action) 4. He would write to me every week when we were dating. (habitual past action)
must	Expresses obligation	We must be on time for class.
ought to	Expresses obligation	I ought to mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as may)

tip

Use the following format to form a yes-no question with a modal auxiliary:

Modal auxiliary	+	subject	+	main verb
Should		I		drive?

Be aware of these four common errors when using modal auxiliaries:

1. Using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal
   A. Incorrect: I can to move this heavy table.
   B. Correct: I can move this heavy table.
2. Using a gerund instead of a base verb after a modal
   a. Incorrect: I could moving to the United States.
   b. Correct: I could move to the United States.
3. Using two modals in a row
   a. Incorrect: I should must renew my passport.
   b. Correct: I must renew my passport.
   c. Correct: I should renew my passport.
4. Leaving out a modal
   a. Incorrect: I renew my passport.
   b. Correct: I must renew my passport.

? Exercise 18

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the common modal auxiliary errors.

I may to go to France on vacation next summer. I shall might visit the Palace of Versailles. I will to drive around the countryside. I could imagining myself living there; however, I will not moved to France because my family should miss me very much.

Modals with Present Perfect Verbs

In the previous section, we defined the present perfect verb tense as describing a continuing situation or something that has just happened. Remember, when a sentence contains a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always *have*.

Be aware of the following common errors when using modal auxiliaries in conditional statements:

Using had instead of have

Incorrect: Jamie would had attended the party, but he was sick.

Correct: Jamie would have attended the party, but he was sick.

Leaving out have

Incorrect: Jamie would attended the party, but he was sick.

Correct: Jamie would have attended the party, but he was sick.

Key Takeaways

- The basic formula for using a modal auxiliary is: subject + modal auxiliary + main verb in the base form.
- There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English: can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, and ought to.
- The four common types of errors when using modals include the following: using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal, using a gerund instead of a base verb after a modal, using two modals in a row, and leaving out a modal.
- In the present perfect tense, when a sentence has a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always have.
- The two common errors when using modals in the present perfect tense include using had instead of have and leaving out have.

Phrasal Verbs

Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs or phrasal verbs. It is important to remember that these expressions cannot be separated.

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	Example
agree with	to agree with something or someone	My husband always agrees with me.
apologize for	to express regret for something, to say sorry about something	I apologize for being late.
believe in	to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something	I believe in educating the world's women.
care about	to think that someone or something is important	I care about the health of our oceans.
hear about	to be told about something or someone	I heard about the teachers' strike.
look after	to watch or to protect someone or something	Will you look after my dog while I am on vacation?
talk about	to discuss something	We will talk about the importance of recycling.
speak to, with t	to talk to/with someone	I will speak to his teacher tomorrow.
wait for	to await the arrival of someone or something	I will wait for my package to arrive.

tip

It is a good idea to memorize these combinations of verbs plus prepositions. Write them down in a notebook along with the definition and practice using them when you speak.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

Basic Agreement

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

1. Number. All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
2. Person. All parts must match in first person (I), second person (you), or third person (he, she, it, they) forms.
3. Case. All parts must match in subjective (I, you, he, she, it, they, we), objective (me, her, him, them, us), or possessive (my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours) forms.
4. Gender. All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form.

Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in -s. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in –s.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I live.	We live.
Second Person	You live.	You live.
Third Person	He/She/It lives.	They live.

tip

Add an -es to the third person singular form of regular verbs that end in -sh,-x, -ch, and -s. (I wish/He wishes, I fix/She fixes, I watch/It watches, I kiss/He kisses.) In the singular form, the pronoun you refers to one person. In the plural form, the pronoun you refers to a group of people, such as a team. Many singular subjects can be made plural by adding an -s. Most regular verbs in the present tense end with an -s in the third person singular. This does not make the verbs plural.

Irregular Verbs

Not all verbs follow a predictable pattern. These verbs are called irregular verbs. Some of the most common irregular verbs are be, have, and do. Learn the forms of these verbs in the present tense to avoid errors in subject-verb agreement.

Be

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I am.	We are.
Second Person	You are.	You are.
Third Person	He/She/It is.	They are.

Have

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I have.	We have.
Second Person	You have.	You have.
Third Person	He/She/It have.	They have.

Do

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I do.	We do.
Second Person	You do.	You do.
Third Person	He/She/It does.	They do.

Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as anyone or everyone;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as team or organization;
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

- Compound subjects combined with and take a plural verb form.
- Compound subjects combined with or and nor are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

> tip
>
> If you can substitute the word “they” for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Intervening Phrases or Clauses

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

Indefinite Pronouns

When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form. However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun.

Indefinite Pronouns that Always Take a Singular Verb	Indefinite Pronouns that can Take a Singular or Plural Verb
anybody, anyone, anything each, everybody, everyone, everything	all (Examples: All of the water **has** evaporated. All of the apples **are** ripe.
nobody, no one, none, nothing somebody, someone, something	some (Examples: Some of the money **was** stolen. Some of the books **were** stolen.

Collective Nouns

Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb.

Example 9.5.22:

The class **respects** the teacher

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Example 9.5.23:

Somewhere deep in the woods **reigns** the **king** of the elves

In this example the verb (*reigns*) comes before the singular subject (*king*).

Here or There

In sentences that begin with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb. If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with here or there, it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

Example 9.5.24:

There **were** many **athletes** training in the gym.

In this example the verb is were and the subject is athletes. (Note: training is not the verb of this sentence. training in the gym is a participial phrase. See Components of a Sentence.)

Questions

Many questions are formed with helping verbs whose form must agree in number with the subject:

Example 9.5.25:

Are you **going** to the party tonight? Answer: Yes, I **am going** to the party.

The verb tense used in the question is present progressive (*are going*), and the subject (*you*) is placed after the helping verb are but before the present participle *going*.

Example 9.5.26:

Does your **car** run? Answer: Yes, my car runs.

In this example, notice that the *s* ending for the singular subject (car) appears at the end of the helping verb *does* in the question. In the answer to the question, the s ending is attached to the verb *run*, and the helping verb is not used.

tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.

Exercise 19

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write OK. Copy the corrected sentence or the word OK on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time.

   _____

2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.

_____

3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.

_____

4. My family are moving to California.

_____

5. Here is the lake I told you about.

_____

6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.

_____

7. Which room is bigger?

_____

8. When are the movie going to start?

_____

9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.

_____

10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

_____

Exercise 20

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph.

Dear Hiring Manager,

I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by email or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,

Felicia Fellini

Key Takeaways

- Parts of sentences must agree in number, person, case, and gender.
- A verb must always agree with its subject in number. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb.
- Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern in their singular and plural forms. Common irregular verbs are to be, to have, and to do.
- A compound subject is formed when two or more nouns are joined by the words and, or, or nor.
- In some sentences, the subject and verb may be separated by a phrase or clause, but the verb must still agree with the subject.
- Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form.
- Collective nouns require singular verbs.
- In sentences that begin with here and there, the subject follows the verb.

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9.6: Nouns and Article Use

Nouns are words that name things, places, people, and ideas. Right now, you may be surrounded by desks, computers, and notebooks. These are called count nouns because you can count the exact number of desks, computers, and notebooks—three desks, one computer, and six notebooks, for example.

On the other hand, you may be carrying a small amount of money in your wallet and sitting on a piece of furniture. These are called non-count nouns. Although you can count the pieces of furniture or the amount of money, you cannot add a number in front of money or furniture, and you cannot simply add -s to the end of a non-count noun. Instead, you must use other words and phrases to indicate the quantity of money and furniture.

Incorrect: five moneys, two furnitures

Correct: some money, two pieces of furniture

Count and Non-count Nouns

A count noun refers to people, places, and things that are separate units. You make count nouns plural by adding –s or -es.

Example 9.6.1:

chair -- Make sure to push the chairs against the wall before you leave.

A non-count noun identifies a whole object that cannot be separated from other identical objects and counted individually. Non-count nouns may refer to concrete objects or abstract objects. A concrete noun identifies an object you can see, taste, touch, or count. An abstract noun identifies an object that you cannot see, touch, or count. There are some exceptions, but most abstract nouns cannot be made plural, so they are non-count nouns. Examples of abstract nouns include anger, education, melancholy, softness, violence, and conduct.

Type of Non-count Nouns	Examples	Sample Sentence
Food	sugar, salt, pepper, lettuce, rice	Add more sugar to my coffee, please.
Solids	concrete, chocolate, silver, soap	The ice cream was covered in creamy chocolate.
Abstract Nouns	peace, warmth, hospitality, information	I need more information about the insurance policy.

Exercise 21

Identify whether the italicized noun in the sentence is a count or non-count noun by writing C or NC above the noun.

1. The amount of traffic on the way home was terrible.
2. Forgiveness is an important part of growing up.
3. I made caramel sauce for the organic apples I bought.
4. I prefer film cameras instead of digital ones.
5. My favorite subject is history.

Definite and Indefinite Articles

The word *the* is a definite article. It refers to one or more specific things. For example, the woman refers to not any woman but a particular woman. The definite article *the* is used before singular and plural count nouns.

The words *a* and *an* are indefinite articles. They refer to one nonspecific thing. For example, *a woman* refers to any woman, not a specific, particular woman. The indefinite article *a* or *an* is used before a singular count noun.

- Definite Articles (The) and Indefinite Articles (A/An) with Count Nouns
  - I saw the concert. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

- I saw the concerts. (plural, refers to more than one specific concert)
- I saw the U2 concert last night. (singular, refers to a specific concert)
- I saw a concert. (singular, refers to any nonspecific concert)

Two Article Rules

The following rules will help to determine when and what kind of article needs to be used.

Rule 1: A singular count noun needs an article or a determiner. Choose *a* or *an* if the noun is indefinite. Choose *the* if the noun is definite

Rule 2: A plural or non-count noun does not need an article unless it is definite.

? Exercise 22

Write the correct article in the blank for each of the following sentences. Write OK if the sentence is correct.

1. (A/An/The) camel can live for days without water. _____
2. I enjoyed (a/an/the) pastries at the Bar Mitzvah. _____
3. (A/An/The) politician spoke of many important issues. _____
4. I really enjoyed (a/an/the) actor's performance in the play. _____
5. (A/An/The) goal I have is to run a marathon this year. _____

? Exercise 23

Correct the misused or missing articles and rewrite the paragraph.

Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. The stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than sun. Did you know that a Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in an entire universe! Just like a human being, the star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. The star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in the nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of the star-forming nebulas are astonishing.

Key Takeaways

- You can make count nouns plural by adding –s or –es.
- Count nouns are individual people, places, or things that can be counted, such as politicians, deserts, or candles.
- Non-count nouns refer to whole things that cannot be made plural, such as salt, peace, or happiness.
- The is a definite article and is used to refer to a specific person, place, or thing, such as the Queen of England.
- A and an are indefinite articles, and they refer to nonspecific people, places, or things, such as an apple or a bicycle.

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9.7: Pronouns

Subject, Object, and Possessive Pronouns

Subject pronouns are often the subject of a sentence—who or what the sentence is about.

Example 9.7.1:

Sentence: She loves the desserts in France.

She is the subject.

Example 9.7.2:

Sentence: By lunch time, they were hungry.

They is the subject.

Object pronouns are often the object of the verb— who or what was acted upon.

Example 9.7.3:

Sentence: Melanie's thoughtfulness touched him.

Him is the object of the verb touched.

Example 9.7.4:

Sentence: We lifted it.

It is the object of the verb lifted.

The masculine subject pronoun is *he*, and the masculine object pronoun is *him*. The feminine subject pronoun is *she*, and the feminine object pronoun is *her*.

A pronoun that shows possession or ownership is called a possessive pronoun.

Example 9.7.5:

Sentence: The teacher took her apple and left.

The pronoun *her* shows the teacher owns the apple.

Example 9.7.6:

Sentence: The hikers spotted their guide on the trail.

The pronoun their shows the hikers follow the guide who was assigned to the hikers.

Table of Pronouns

Subject Pronouns	I, you, he, she, it, we, they
Object Pronouns	me, you, him, her, it, us, them
Possessive Pronouns	my (mine), your(s), his, hers, its, our(s), their(s)

Exercise 24

Complete the following sentences by circling the correct pronoun.

1. Unfortunately, the house was too expensive for (we, us, they).
2. I completed (mine, my, your) research paper, and she completed (his, hers, theirs).
3. My dog Buster is old, but (he, it, them) is very playful.
4. That ring belongs to my father, so it is (hers, his, theirs).
5. I cannot find my textbook, so I think (they, it, he) is lost.

Common Pronoun Errors

English language learners often make the same errors when using pronouns. The following examples illustrate common errors.

Incorrect: Me and Daniela went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is incorrect because an object pronoun (me) is used instead of a subject pronoun.

Correct: Daniela and I went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is now correct because a subject pronoun (I) is used.

Incorrect: Mark put her grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is incorrect because the pronoun her refers to a female, and Mark is a male.

Correct: Mark put his grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is now correct because the male pronoun his refers to the male person, Mark.

Incorrect: The woman she went to work earlier than usual.

This sentence is incorrect because the subject the woman is repeated by the pronoun she.

Correct: The woman went to work earlier than usual. (Or) She went to work earlier than usual.

These sentences are now correct because the unnecessary repeated subject has been removed.

Exercise 25

Correct the following sentences that have pronoun errors. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. Us are going to the county fair this weekend.
2. Steven did not want to see a movie because she had a headache.
3. The teacher congratulated Maria and me.
4. The eighth grade students they were all behaving mysteriously well.
5. Derrick and he received the best grade on the grammar test.

Relative Pronouns

A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun that helps connect details to the subject of the sentence and may often combine two shorter sentences. The relative pronouns are *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, *that*, *where*. On how they are used, see Relative Pronouns and Adjective Clauses.

First-, Second-, and Third-person Pronouns

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I am.	We are.
Second Person	You are.	You are.
Third Person	He/She/It is.	They are.

Exercise 26

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct relative pronoun.

1. He showed me a photo (who, that) upset me.
2. Soccer is a fast moving game (who, that) has many fans worldwide.
3. Juan is a man (which, who) has high standards for everything.
4. Jamaica is a beautiful country (that, who) I would like to visit next year.
5. My mother only eats bananas (who, that) are green.

Exercise 27

Combine the two sentences into one sentence using a relative pronoun.

1. Jeff is a dependable person. He will never let you down.
2. I rode a roller coaster. It was scary.
3. At the beach, I always dig my feet into the sand. It protects them from the hot sun.
4. Jackie is trying not to use so many plastic products. They are not good for the environment.
5. My Aunt Sherry is teaching me how to drive. She has never been in accident or gotten a ticket.

Key Takeaways

- A pronoun is used in place of a noun. There are several types of pronouns, including subject and object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and relative pronouns.
- Subject pronouns are the “who” and “what” the sentence is about. Object pronouns are the “who” and “what” that receives the action. A possessive pronoun is a pronoun showing ownership.
- Common pronoun errors include mixing up subject, object, and gender pronouns, and repeating the subject of a sentence with a pronoun. Relative pronouns help combine two separate sentences.

Pronouns and Antecedents

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like “Bob said that Bob was tired or Christina told the class that Christina received an A.” Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the antecedent of the pronoun.

Example 9.7.7:

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.

She refers to Lani. *Lani* is the antecedent of she.

2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.

Him refers to Jeremy. *Jeremy* is the antecedent of him.

3. Crina and Rosalie have been best friends ever since they were freshman in high school.

They refers to Crina and Rosalie. *Crina and Rosalie* is the antecedent of they.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular.

Agreement in Person

	Singular Pronouns			Plural Pronouns		
First Person	I	me	my (mine)	we	us	our (ours)
Second Person	you	you	your (yours)	you	you	your (your)
Third Person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its	they	them	their (theirs)

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular. Note: The pronoun “they” is often used for gender neutrality.

Common Indefinite Pronouns				
all	each one	few	nothing	several
any	each other	many	one	some
anybody	either	neither	one another	somebody
anything	everybody	nobody	oneself	someone
both	everyone	none	other	something
each	everything	no one	others	anyone

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular.

Common Collective Nouns		
audience	faculty	public
band	family	school
class	government	society
committee	group	team
company	Jury	tribe

? Exercise 28

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.
8. My mother’s singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Who vs. Whom

Who or *whoever* is always the subject of a verb. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

Example 9.7.8:

Who won the marathon last Tuesday?

I wonder who came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, whom and whomever serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does not perform an action. Use whom or whomever when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

Example 9.7.9:

Whom did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)

From whom did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use who and whom, try this trick. Take the following sentence: Who/Whom do I consider my best friend? Reorder the sentence in your head, using either he or him in place of who or whom. I consider him my best friend. I consider he my best friend. Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use him, you should use whom.

Exercise 29

Complete the following sentences by adding who or whom.

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.
8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

Key Takeaways

- Pronouns and their antecedents need to agree in number and person.
- Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- Pronouns can function as subjects or objects.
- Subject pronouns are never used as objects, and object pronouns are never used as subjects.
- Who serves as a subject of a verb.
- Whom serves as an object of a sentence (direct object) or the object of a preposition.

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9.8: Punctuation (Part 1)

Commas

The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

1. **Introductory word**: Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
2. **Lists**: The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
3. **Coordinating adjectives**: He was tired, hungry, and late.
4. **Conjunctions in compound sentences**: The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
5. **Interrupting words**: I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
6. **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters**: The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.
7. **Nonrestrictive adjective clauses**: Jimmy Carter, who was the first president from Georgia, visited Atlanta last week.

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

Example 9.8.1:

Without spoiling the surprise, we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, without spoiling the surprise is an introductory phrase, while we need to tell her to save the date is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

Example 9.8.2:

Ironically, she already had plans for that day

Exercise 30

Look for the introductory word or phrase. Then add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
5. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
6. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
7. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word and before the last item.

Example 9.8.3:

We'll need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store.

The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word and does not always need to be before the last adjective.

Example 9.8.4:

It was a bright, windy, clear day.

Our kite glowed red, yellow, and blue in the morning sunlight.

Exercise 31

Use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as for, and, or but.

Example 9.8.5:

He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

He says his fever is gone, but he is still very tired.

Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called interrupting words. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

Example 9.8.6:

If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.

Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

Example 9.8.7:

An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.

We have known, for hundreds of years now, that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

Exercise 32

Insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and emails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

Example 9.8.8:

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

He visited the country in July 2009.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should get our tickets soon.

You also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

Example 9.8.9:

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hope, Missouri 70832.

After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an email or a letter, you add a comma after the greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Example 9.8.10:

Hello,

I would like more information about your job posting.

Thank you,

Anita Al-Sayf

Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,

Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.

Sincerely,

Jack Fromont

Exercise 33

Use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any emails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

Key Takeaways

- Punctuation marks provide visual cues to readers to tell them how to read a sentence. Punctuation marks convey meaning.
- Commas indicate a pause or a list in a sentence.
- A comma should be used after an introductory word to separate this word from the main sentence.
- A comma comes after each noun in a list. The word and is added before the last noun, which is not followed by a comma.
- A comma comes after every coordinating adjective except for the last adjective.
- Commas can be used to separate the two independent clauses in compound sentences as long as a conjunction follows the comma.
- Commas are used to separate interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.
- When you write the date, you add a comma between the day and the year. You also add a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.
- When they are used in a sentence, addresses have commas after the street address, and the city. If a sentence continues after the address, a comma comes after the zip code.
- When you write a letter, you use commas in your greeting at the beginning and in your closing at the end of your letter.

Semicolons

The semicolon (;) can be used in a variety of ways. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

Correct: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.

Choppy: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview. Appearances are important.

Incorrect: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important.

In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

Correct: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; or red, green, and brown.

Incorrect: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

tip

Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions such as and, or, and but.

Exercise 34

Correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Key Takeaways

- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses.
- Use a semicolon to separate items in a list when those items already require a comma.

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9.9: Punctuation (Part 2)

Colons

The colon (:) is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Example 9.9.11:

Dear Hiring Manager:

To: Human Resources

From: Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

Example 9.9.12:

The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to Introduce a Quote

You can use a colon to introduce a quote if the introduction to the quote is a complete, independent clause:

Correct: Mark Twain had some great advice about honesty: “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

Incorrect: Mark Twain said: “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

Correct: Mark Twain said, “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

If a quote is longer than four typed lines, skip a line after the colon and indent the left margin of the quote five spaces. Because quotations longer than four typed lines use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary.

Example 9.9.13:

My father always loved Mark Twain’s words:

There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

tip

Long quotations, which are four typed lines or more, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers.

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like such as or for example.

Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Incorrect: Our company does: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.

tip

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Proper noun: We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from Hamlet: “To thine own self be true.”

Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother’s cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect: The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

? Exercise 35

Correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write OK.

1. Don’t give up you never know what tomorrow brings.

   _____

2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.

   _____

3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.

   _____

4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.

   _____

5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.

   _____

6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.

   _____

7. The boss’s message was clear lateness would not be tolerated.

   _____

8. Next semester, we will read some well-known authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Orwell.

   _____

9. My little sister said what we were all thinking “We should have stayed home.”

   _____

10. Trust me I have done this before.

    _____

Key Takeaways

- Use a colon to introduce a list, quote, or example.
- Use a colon after a greeting in business letters and memos.

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title of a short published work. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation, which is also called reported speech, does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Direct quotation: Carly said, “I’m not ever going back there again.”

Indirect quotation: Carly said that she would never go back there.

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person's exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

Beginning: Madison said, "Let's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner."

Middle: "Let's stop at the farmers market," Madison said, "to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.

End: "Let's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner," Madison said.

Speaker not identified: "Let's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner."

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote when it is the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed after commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

Question is part of quoted text: The new employee asked, "When is lunch?"

Question is not part of quoted text: Did you hear her say you were "the next Picasso"?

Exclamation is part of quoted text: My supervisor beamed, "Thanks for all of your hard work!"

Exclamation is not part of quoted text: He said I "single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars"!

Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotation marks (' ') to show a quotation within in a quotation.

✔ Example 9.9.14:

Theresa said, "I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, 'No dogs allowed.'"

"When you say, 'I can't help it,' what exactly does that mean?"

"The instructions say, 'Tighten the screws one at a time.'"

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, are italicized or underlined, but never both at the same time.

✔ Example 9.9.15:

"Annabelle Lee" is one of my favorite romantic poems.

The New York Times has been in publication since 1851.

? Exercise 36

Correct these sentences by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write OK.

1. Yasmin said, I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat.

   _____

2. Where should we go? said Russell.

   _____

3. Yasmin said it didn't matter to her.

   _____

4. I know, said Russell, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.

   _____

5. Perfect! said Yasmin.

   _____

6. Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.

   _____

7. I didn't! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?

   _____

8. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.

   _____

9. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?

   _____

10. That's the one said Russell.

    _____

Key Takeaways

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.
- Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Apostrophes

An apostrophe (') is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter s indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add 's.

Example 9.9.16:

Jen's dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

The dog's leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess's sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in s still take the apostrophe s ('s) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in s, just add an apostrophe ('). If the plural noun does not end in s, add an apostrophe and an s ('s).

Plural noun that ends in s: The drummers' sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.

Plural noun that does not end in s: The people's votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

Example 9.9.17:

I do not like ice cream.

I don't like ice cream.

Notice how the words do and not have been combined to form the contraction don't. The apostrophe shows where the o in not has been left out.

Example 9.9.18:

We will see you later.

We'll see you later.

Be careful not to confuse it's with its. It's is a contraction of the words it and is. Its is a possessive pronoun.

Example 9.9.19:

It's cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)

The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words it is in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction it's.

Exercise 37

Correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. "What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes."
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

Key Takeaways

- Use apostrophes to show possession. Add 's to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in s.
- Add ' to plural nouns that end in s.
- Use apostrophes in contractions to show where a letter or letters have been left out.

Dashes

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Example 9.9.20:

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

Exercise 38

Clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?
2. I don't know I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Key Takeaways

- Dashes indicate a pause in text.
- Dashes set off information in a sentence to show emphasis.

Hyphens

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways.

Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

Example 9.9.21:

The fifty-five-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.

My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit-forming.

My study group focused on preparing for the midyear review.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

Example 9.9.22:

My supervisor was concerned that the team meet-
ing would conflict with the client meeting.

Key Takeaways

- Hyphens join words that work as one adjective.
- Hyphens break words across two lines of text.

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9.10: Capitalization

Rules for Capitalization

- Capitalize the first word of a sentence.
- Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on.
- Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way.
- Capitalize days of the week, months of the year, and holidays.
- Capitalize titles of positions when they are accompanied by proper names.
  - **Examples**: President Obama, Governor Scott Brown, Judge Wheeler.
- Capitalize the names of specific movements or events.
  - **Examples**: the Civil Rights Movement, World War II, D-Day
- Capitalize the letters that make up abbreviations for organizations or agencies.
  - **Examples**: FEMA, EPA, NFL. CNN.
- Computer-related words such as “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are usually capitalized; however, “email” and “online” are never capitalized.
- Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

Table of Common vs. Proper Nouns

Common Noun	Proper Noun
museum	The Art Institute of Chicago
theater	Apollo Theater
country	Malaysia
uncle	Uncle Javier
doctor	Dr. Jackson
book	*Pride and Prejudice*
college	Smith College
war	the Spanish-American War
historical event	The Renaissance

Key Takeaways

- Learning and applying the basic rules of capitalization is a fundamental aspect of good writing.
- Identifying and correcting errors in capitalization is an important writing skill.

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9.11: Diction and Spelling (Part 1)

The English language contains an enormous and ever-growing number of words. Enhancing your vocabulary by learning new words can seem overwhelming, but if you know the common prefixes and suffixes of English, you will understand many more words. Mastering common prefixes and suffixes is like learning a code. Once you crack the code, you can not only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words.

Prefixes and Suffixes

A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to create a new meaning.

Table of Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
dis	not, opposite of	dis + satisfied = dissatisfied
mis	wrongly	mis + spell = misspell
un	un	un + acceptable = unacceptable
re	again	re + election = reelection
inter	between	inter + related = interrelated
pre	before	pre + pay = prepay
non	not	non + sense = nonsense
super	above	super + script = superscript
sub	under	sub + merge = submerge
anti	against, opposing	anti + bacterial = antibacterial

? Exercise 39

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach _____comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his _____matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt _____glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those _____aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's _____standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a _____natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to _____locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to _____act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the _____cautions about watching my step.
10. A _____combatant is another word for civilian.

A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word to create a new meaning. Study the suffix rules in the following boxes.

Rules for Prefixes

The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is not to add letters or leave out any letters.

Rule 1

When adding the suffixes -ness and -ly to a word, the spelling of the word does not change.

Example 9.11.1:

dark + ness = darkness

scholar + ly = scholarly

Exceptions to Rule 1

When the word ends in y, change the y to i before adding -ness and -ly.

Example 9.11.2:

ready + ly = readily

happy + ness = happiness

Rule 2

When the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the silent e in the root word.

Example 9.11.3:

care + ing = caring

use + able = usable

Exceptions to Rule 2

When the word ends in ce or ge, keep the silent e if the suffix begins with a or o.

Example 9.11.4:

replace + able = replaceable

courage + ous = courageous

Rule 3

When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the silent e in the original word.

Example 9.11.5:

care + ful = careful

care + less = careless

true + ly = truly

argue + ment = argument

Rule 4

When the word ends in a consonant plus y, change the y to i before any suffix not beginning with i.

Example 9.11.6:

sunny + er = sunnier

hurry + ing = hurrying

Rule 5

When the suffix begins with a vowel, double the final consonant only if (1) the word has only one syllable or is accented on the last syllable and (2) the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.

Example 9.11.7:

tan + ing = tanning (one syllable word)

regret + ing = regretting (The accent is on the last syllable; the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.)

cancel + ed = canceled (The accent is not on the last syllable.)

prefer + ed = preferred

Exercise 40

Write the correct forms of the words with their suffixes.

1. refer + ed
2. refer + ence
3. mope + ing
4. approve + al
5. green + ness
6. benefit + ed
7. resubmit + ing
8. use + age
9. greedy + ly
10. excite + ment

Key Takeaways

- A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- Learning the meanings of prefixes and suffixes will help expand your vocabulary, which will help improve your writing.

Commonly Confused Words

Some words in English cause trouble for speakers and writers because these words share a similar pronunciation, meaning, or spelling with another word. These words are called commonly confused words. For example, read aloud the following sentences containing the commonly confused words new and knew:

Example 9.11.8:

I liked her new sweater.

I knew she would wear that sweater today.

These words may sound alike when spoken, but they carry entirely different usages and meanings. New is an adjective that describes the sweater, and knew is the past tense of the verb to know.

Recognizing Commonly Confused Words

New and knew are just two of the words that can be confusing because of their similarities. Familiarize yourself with the following list of commonly confused words. Recognizing these words in your own writing and in other pieces of writing can help you choose the correct word.

List of Commonly Confused Words

- a, an, and
  - a (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant.
    a key, a mouse, a screen
  - an (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel.
    an airplane, an ocean, an igloo

    - and (conjunction). Connects two or more words together.
      peanut butter and jelly, pen and pencil, jump and shout
- accept, except
    - accept (verb). Means to take or agree to something offered.
      They accepted our proposal for the conference.
    - except (conjunction). Means only or but.
      We could fly there except the tickets cost too much.
    - affect, effect
    - affect (verb). Means to create a change.
      Hurricane winds affect the amount of rainfall.
    - effect (noun). Means an outcome or result.
      The heavy rains will have an effect on the crop growth.
- are, our
    - are (verb). A conjugated form of the verb to be.
      My cousins are all tall and blonde.
    - our (pronoun). Indicates possession, usually follows the pronoun we.
      We will bring our cameras to take pictures.
- by, buy
    - by (preposition). Means next to.
      My glasses are by the bed.
    - buy (verb). Means to purchase.
      I will buy new glasses after the doctor’s appointment.
- its, it’s
    - its (pronoun). A form of it that shows possession.
      The butterfly flapped its wings.
    - it’s (contraction). Joins the words it and is.
      It’s the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.
- know, no
    - know (verb). Means to understand or possess knowledge.
      I know the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers.
    - no. Used to make a negative.
      I have no time to visit the zoo this weekend.
- loose, lose
    - loose (adjective). Describes something that is not tight or is detached.
      Without a belt, her pants are loose on her waist.
    - lose (verb). Means to forget, to give up, or to fail to earn something.
      She will lose even more weight after finishing the marathon training.
- of, have
    - of (preposition). Means from or about.
      I studied maps of the city to know where to rent a new apartment.
    - have (verb). Means to possess something.
      I have many friends to help me move.
    - have (linking verb). Used to connect verbs.
      I should have helped her with that heavy box.
- quite, quiet, quit
    - quite (adverb). Means really or truly.
      My work will require quite a lot of concentration.
    - quiet (adjective). Means not loud.
      I need a quiet room to complete the assignments.

- quit (verb). Means to stop or to end.
  I will quit when I am hungry for dinner.

- right, write
  - right (adjective). Means proper or correct.
    When bowling, she practices the right form.
  - right (adjective). Also means the opposite of left.
    The ball curved to the right and hit the last pin.
  - write (verb). Means to communicate on paper.
    After the team members bowl, I will write down their scores.
- set, sit
  - set (verb). Means to put an item down.
    She set the mug on the saucer.
  - set (noun). Means a group of similar objects.
    All the mugs and saucers belonged in a set.
  - sit (verb). Means to lower oneself down on a chair or another place.
    I'll sit on the sofa while she brews the tea.
- suppose, supposed
  - suppose (verb). Means to think or to consider.
    I suppose I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe.
  - suppose (verb). Means to suggest.
    Suppose we all split the cost of the dinner.
  - supposed (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose, meaning required or allowed.
    She was supposed to create the menu.
- than, then
  - than (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing
    Registered nurses require less schooling than doctors.
  - then (adverb). Means next or at a specific time.
    Doctors first complete medical school and then obtain a residency.
- their, they're, there
  - their (pronoun). A form of they that shows possession.
    The dog walker feeds their dogs everyday at two o'clock.
  - they're (contraction). Joins the words they and are.
    They're the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.
  - there (adverb). Indicates a particular place.
    The dogs' bowls are over there, next to the pantry.
  - there (pronoun). Indicates the presence of something
    There are more treats if the dogs behave.
- to, two, too
  - to (preposition). Indicates movement.
    Let's go to the circus.
  - to. A word that completes an infinitive verb.
    to play, to ride, to watch.
  - two. The number after one. It describes how many.
    Two clowns squirted the elephants with water.
  - Too (adverb). Means also or very.
    The tents were too loud, and we left.
- use, used
  - use (verb). Means to apply for some purpose.
    We use a weed whacker to trim the hedges.

- used. The past tense form of the verb to use
  He used the lawnmower last night before it rained.
- used to. Indicates something done in the past but not in the present
  He used to hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.

- who's, whose
  - who's (contraction). Joins the words who and either is or has.
    Who's the new student? Who's met him?
  - whose (pronoun). A form of who that shows possession.
    Whose schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?
- your, you're
  - your (pronoun). A form of you that shows possession.
    Your book bag is unzipped.
  - you're (contraction). Joins the words you and are.
    You're the girl with the unzipped book bag.

The English language contains so many words; no one can say for certain how many words exist. In fact, many words in English are borrowed from other languages. Many words have multiple meanings and forms, further expanding the immeasurable number of English words. Although the list of commonly confused words serves as a helpful guide, even these words may have more meanings than shown here. When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!

Strategies to Avoid Commonly Confused Words

When writing, you need to choose the correct word according to its spelling and meaning in the context. Not only does selecting the correct word improve your vocabulary and your writing, but it also makes a good impression on your readers. It also helps reduce confusion and improve clarity. The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

Use a dictionary. Keep a dictionary at your desk while you write. Look up words when you are uncertain of their meanings or spellings. Many dictionaries are also available online, and the Internet's easy access will not slow you down. Check out your cell phone or smartphone to see if a dictionary app is available.

Keep a list of words you commonly confuse. Be aware of the words that often confuse you. When you notice a pattern of confusing words, keep a list nearby, and consult the list as you write. Check the list again before you submit an assignment to your instructor.

Study the list of commonly confused words. You may not yet know which words confuse you, but before you sit down to write, study the words on the list. Prepare your mind for working with words by reviewing the commonly confused words identified in this chapter.

Key Takeaways

- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.
- Although commonly confused words may look alike or sound alike, their meanings are very different.
- Consulting the dictionary is one way to make sure you are using the correct word in your writing. You may also keep a list of commonly confused words nearby when you write, and you may study the list of commonly confused words in this chapter.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers.

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9.12: Diction and Spelling (Part 2)

Avoiding Slang and Clichés

Avoiding Slang

Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as emails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

? Exercise 41

Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying "like" and "um," and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being up there. I feel like I've been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don't enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I'm surprised that people didn't boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Avoiding Clichés

Clichés are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. Writing that uses clichés often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.

1. Clichéd: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my blood boil.
2. Plain: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
3. Original: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Avoiding Overly General Words

Specific words and images make your writing more interesting to read. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing; instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring yours words to life. Add words that provide color, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.

✓ Example 9.12.9:

General: My new puppy is cute.

Specific: My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.

General: My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.

Specific: My teacher, Ms. Atwater, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Spelling Rules

Common Spelling Rules

The best way to master new words is to understand the key spelling rules. Keep in mind, however, that some spelling rules carry exceptions. A spell checker may catch these exceptions, but knowing them yourself will prepare you to spell accurately on the first try. You may want to try memorizing each rule and its exception like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

Write i before e except after c, or when pronounced ay like "neighbor" or "weigh."

Example 9.12.10:

achieve, niece, alien

receive, deceive

When words end in a consonant plus y, drop the y and add an i before adding another ending.

Example 9.12.11:

happy + er = happier

cry + ed = cried

When words end in a vowel plus y, keep the y and add the ending.

Example 9.12.12:

delay + ed = delayed

Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: day, lay, say, pay = daily, laid, said, paid

When adding an ending that begins with a vowel, such as -able, -ence, -ing, or -ity, drop the last e in a word.

Example 9.12.13:

write + ing = writing

pure + ity = purity

When adding an ending that begins with a consonant, such as -less, -ment, or -ly, keep the last e in a word.

Example 9.12.14:

hope + less = hopeless

advertise + ment = advertisement

For many words ending in a consonant and an o, add -s when using the plural form.

Example 9.12.15:

photo + s = photos

soprano + s = sopranos

Add -es to words that end in s, ch, sh, and x.

Example 9.12.16:

church + es = churches

fax + es = faxes

Tips to Improve Spelling Skills

1. Read the words in your assignment carefully, and avoid skimming over the page. Focusing on your written assignment word by word will help you pay close attention to each word's spelling. Skimming quickly, you may overlook misspelled words.
2. Use mnemonic devices to remember the correct spelling of words. Mnemonic devices, or memory techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or practices that help you remember. For example, the saying "It is important to be a beautiful person

inside and out" may help you remember that beautiful begins with "be a." The practice of pronouncing the word Wednesday Wed-nes-day may help you remember how to spell the word correctly.

3. Use a dictionary. Many professional writers rely on the dictionary—either in print or online. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary, ask your instructor to help you find a "poor speller's dictionary."
4. Use your computer's spell checker. The spell checker will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool. See the introduction to this section for cautions about spell checkers.
5. Keep a list of frequently misspelled words. You will often misspell the same words again and again, but do not let this discourage you. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell, and you can add them to a list to learn to spell them correctly.
6. Look over corrected papers for misspelled words. Add these words to your list and practice writing each word four to five times each. Writing teachers will especially notice which words you frequently misspell, and it will help you excel in your classes if they see your spelling improve.
7. Test yourself with flashcards. Sometimes the old-fashioned methods are best, and for spelling, this tried and true technique has worked for many students. You can work with a peer or alone.
8. Review the common spelling rules explained in this chapter. Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules in this chapter again and again, as needed.

tip

Remember to focus on spelling during the editing and revising step of the writing process. Start with the big ideas such as organizing your piece of writing and developing effective paragraphs, and then work your way down toward the smaller—but equally important— details like spelling and punctuation.

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

Commonly Misused Homonyms

- principle, principal
  - principle (noun). A fundamental concept that is accepted as true.
    The principle of human equality is an important foundation for all nations.
  - principal (noun). The original amount of debt on which interest is calculated.
    The payment plan allows me to pay back only the principal amount, not any compounded interest.
  - principal (noun). A person who is the main authority of a school.
    The principal held a conference for both parents and teachers.
- where, wear, ware
  - where (adverb). The place in which something happens.
    Where is the restaurant?
  - wear (verb). To carry or have on the body.
    I will wear my hiking shoes when go on a climb tomorrow morning.
  - ware (noun). Articles of merchandise or manufacture (usually, wares).
    When I return from shopping, I will show you my wares.
- lead, led
  - lead (noun). A type of metal used in pipes and batteries.
    The lead pipes in my homes are old and need to be replaced.
  - led (verb). The past tense of the verb lead.
    After the garden, she led the patrons through the museum.
- which, witch
  - which (pronoun). Replaces one out of a group.
    Which apartment is yours?

- witch (noun). A person who practices sorcery or who has supernatural powers.
  She thinks she is a witch, but she does not seem to have any powers.

- peace, piece
  - peace (noun). A state of tranquility or quiet.
    For once, there was peace between the argumentative brothers.
  - piece (noun). A part of a whole.
    I would like a large piece of cake, thank you.
- passed, past
  - passed (verb). To go away or move.
    He passed the slower cars on the road using the left lane.
  - past (noun). Having existed or taken place in a period before the present.
    The argument happened in the past, so there is no use in dwelling on it.
- lessen, lesson
  - lessen (verb). To reduce in number, size, or degree.
    My dentist gave me medicine to lessen the pain of my aching tooth.
  - lesson (noun). A reading or exercise to be studied by a student.
    Today's lesson was about mortgage interest rates.
- patience, patients
  - patience (noun). The capacity of being patient (waiting for a period of time or enduring pains and trials calmly).
    The novice teacher's patience with the unruly class was astounding.
  - patients (plural noun). Individuals under medical care.
    The patients were tired of eating the hospital food, and they could not wait for a home-cooked meal.
- sees, seas, seize
  - sees (verb). To perceive with the eye.
    He sees a whale through his binoculars.
  - seas (plural noun). The plural of sea, a great body of salt water.
    The tidal fluctuation of the oceans and seas are influenced by the moon.
  - seize (verb). To possess or take by force.
    The king plans to seize all the peasants' land.
- threw, through
  - threw (verb). The past tense of throw.
    She threw the football with perfect form.
  - through (preposition). A word that indicates movement.
    She walked through the door and out of his life.

Commonly Misspelled Words

The table below lists commonly misspelled words. You probably use these words every day in either speaking or writing. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the problem area of the word that is often spelled incorrectly. If you can, use this list as a guide before, during, and after you write.

Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

1. Copy each word a few times and underline the problem area.
2. Copy the words onto flash cards and have a friend test you.

Table of Commonly Misspelled Words

across	disappoint	integration	particular	separate
address	disapprove	intelligent	perform	similar
answer	doesn't	interest	perhaps	since
argument	eighth	interfere	personnel	speech

athlete	embarrass	jewelry	possess	strength
beginning	environment	judgment	possible	success
behavior	exaggerate	knowledge	prefer	surprise
calendar	familiar	maintain	prejudice	taught
career	finally	mathematics	privilege	temperature
conscience	government	meant	probably	thorough
crowded	grammar	necessary	psychology	thought
definite	height	nervous	pursue	tired
describe	Illegal	occasion	reference	until
desperate	immediately	opinion	rhythm	weight
different	Important	optimist	ridiculous	written

Key Takeaways

- Accurate, error-free spelling enhances your credibility with the reader.
- Mastering the rules of spelling may help you become a better speller.
- Knowing the commonly misused homonyms may prevent spelling errors.
- Studying the list of commonly misspelled words in this chapter, or studying a list of your own, is one way to improve your spelling skills.

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