THE WORD ON COLLEGE READING AND WRITING



Carol Burnell, Jaime Wood, Monique Babin, Susan Pesznecker, and Nicole Rosevear
Clackamas Community & Portland State University

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The Word on College Reading and Writing

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Licensing

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

SECTION OVERVIEW

Unit 1: Working with Texts

In academic terms, a text is anything that conveys a set of meanings to the person who examines it. You might have thought that texts were limited to written materials, such as books, magazines, newspapers, and ‘zines (an informal term for magazine that refers especially to fanzines and webzines). Those items are indeed texts—but so are movies, paintings, television shows, songs, political cartoons, online materials, advertisements, maps, works of art, and even rooms full of people. If we can look at something, explore it, find layers of meaning in it, and draw information and conclusions from it, we’re looking at a text.

Most of the texts you’re exposed to in college will be hard (printed) copy or online written texts like books, articles, and essays—college remains a rather traditional place, and these kinds of texts are still the most common types of learning material. But you’ll also be asked to explore other types of textual materials, and it’s good to be prepared.

Which of these would be a kind of text?

- A graphic novel or comic book
- A journal written by a 15 year old
- A series of photographs
- A poem
- A movie

See the Appendix, Results for the “Check Your Understanding” Activities, for answers

2: Building Strong Reading Skills

2.10: Troubleshoot Your Reading
2.1: Read Effectively
2.2: Create an Optimal Setting for Reading
2.3: Use Pre-reading Strategies
2.4: Read Efficiently
2.5: Annotate and Take Notes
2.6: Do Quick Research
2.7: Discover What a Text is Trying to Say
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3.7: Word Choice
3.8: Paragraph Analysis
3.9: Summarizing a Text

4: What is Information Literacy?

4.1: Why is Information Literacy Important?

4.2: Finding Quality Texts

4.3: Learning About Plagiarism and Guidelines for Using Information

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Building Strong Reading Skills

2.10: Troubleshoot Your Reading
2.1: Read Effectively
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2.10: Troubleshoot Your Reading

Sometimes reading may seem difficult, you might have trouble getting started, or other challenges will surface. Here are some troubleshooting ideas.

Problem: "Sometimes I put my reading off or don't have time to do it, and then when I do have time, well, I'm out of time."

> **Suggestions**: That's a problem, for sure. I always suggest to students that rather than trying to do a bunch of reading at once, they try to do a little bit every day. That makes it easier.
>
> If you're stuck up against a deadline with no reading done, one suggestion is to do some good pre-reading. That should at least give you the idea of the main topic.
>
> Another idea is to divide the total pages assigned by the number of available days, figuring out how many pages you'll need to read each day to finish the assignment. Sometimes approaching the text in smaller pieces like this can make it feel more doable. Also, once you figure out how long it takes you to read, say, five pages, you can predict how much time it will take to read a larger section.

Problem: "If I don't understand some part of the reading, I just skip over it and hope someone will explain it later in class."

> **Suggestions**: Not understanding reading can be frustrating—and it can make it hard to succeed on your assignments. The best suggestion is to talk with your teacher. Let them know you don't understand the reading, and they should be able to help.
>
> Another suggestion is to read sentence by sentence. Be sure you understand each word—if you don't, look them up. As you read, master each sentence before going on to the next one, and then, at the end of a paragraph, stop and summarize the entire paragraph, reflecting on what you just read.
>
> Yet another idea: use the Web and do a search for the title of the reading followed by the word 'analysis.' Reading what other people have said about the text may help you get past your stuck points. If you're in a face-to-face classroom, asking a question in class will encourage discussion and will also help your fellow students, who may have the same confusions.

Problem: "I really don't like to read that much, so I read pretty fast and tend to stick with the obvious meanings. But then the teacher is always asking us to dig deeper and try to figure out what the author really meant. I get so frustrated with that!"

> **Suggestions**: College-level writing tends to have multiple layers of significance. The easiest way to think about this is by separating the "obvious or surface meaning" from the "buried treasure meaning." This can actually be one of the most fun parts of a reading—you get to play detective. As you read, try to ask questions of the text: Why? Who? Where? For what reason? These questions will help you think more deeply about the text.

Problem: "Sometimes I jump to conclusions about what a text means and then later find out I wasn't understanding it completely."

> **Suggestions**: This usually happens when we read too quickly and don't engage with the text. The best way to avoid this is to slow down and take time with the text, following all the guidelines for effective and critical reading.

Problem: "When a text suggests an idea I strongly disagree with, I can't seem to go any further."

> **Suggestions**: Aristotle was known for saying, "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." As a college student, you must be ready to explore and examine a wide range of ideas, whether you agree with them or not. In approaching texts with an open and willing mind, you leave yourself ready to engage with a wide world of ideas—many of which you may not have encountered before. This is what college is all about.

Problem: "I'm a slow reader. It takes me a long time to read material, and sometimes the amount of assigned reading panics me."

> **Suggestions**: Two thoughts. One, the more you read, the easier it gets: like anything, reading improves with practice. And two, you'll probably find your reading is most effective if you try to do a little bit every day rather than several hours of reading all at one time. Plan ahead! Be aware of what you need to read and divide it up among the available days. Reading 100 pages in a week may seem overwhelming, but reading 15 pages a day will be easier. Be sure to read when you're fresh, too, rather than at day's end, when you're exhausted.

Problem: "Sometimes the teacher assigns content in an area I really know nothing about. I want to be an accountant. Why should I read philosophy or natural history, and how am I supposed to understand them?"

Suggestions: By reading a wide variety of texts, we don't just increase our knowledge base—we also make our minds work. This kind of "mental exercise" teaches the brain and prepares it to deal with all kinds of critical and innovative thinking. It also helps train us to different reading and writing tasks, even when they're not familiar to us.

Problem: "When I examine a text, I tend to automatically accept what it says. But the teacher is always encouraging us to ask questions and not make assumptions."

Suggestions: What you're doing is reading as a reader—reading for yourself and making your own assumptions. The teacher wants you to reach for the next level by reading critically. By engaging with the text and digging through it as if you're on an archaeological expedition, you'll discover even more about the text. This can be fun, and it also helps train your brain to explore texts with an analytic eye.

Problem: "I really hate reading. I've found I can skip the readings, read the Sparks Notes, and get by just fine."

Suggestions: First, if you aren't familiar with Sparks Notes, it's an online site that provides summary and analysis of many literary texts and other materials, and students often use this to either replace reading or to better understand materials. You may be able to get by, at least for a while, with reading Sparks Notes alone, for they do a decent basic job of summarizing content and talking about simple themes. But Sparks isn't good at reading texts deeply or considering deep analysis, which means a Sparks-only approach will result in your missing a lot of what the text includes.

You'll also be missing some great experiences. The more you read, the easier reading becomes. The more you read *deeply* and critically and the more comfortable you become with analyzing texts, the easier that process becomes. And as your textual skills become stronger, you'll find yourself more successful with all of your college studies, too. Reading remains a vital college (and life!) skill—the more you practice reading, the better you'll be at it. And honestly, reading can be fun, too– not to mention a great way to relax and an almost instant stress reducer.



Check Your Understanding: Reflect on Your Own Reading Practices

After reviewing the above section, identify one or two key issues from the list that you might relate to.

Consider how the possible suggestions might work for you.

Write a short plan—in one paragraph—that explains how you could implement a solution to help you improve your reading practices.

See the Appendix, Results for the “Check Your Understanding” Activities, for answers.

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2.1: Read Effectively



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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.

How do you become a reader, or a better reader?

> **First**, read every day. And vary the materials you read: a book, a magazine article, an online blog, etc. Try readings things that are a little challenging. In other words, don’t just vary the subject matter–vary the difficulty, too. Stretch!
>
> **Second**, learn and practice the skills of effective reading (which are explained below in this section).
>
> **Third**, keep reading. Every day. And use good effective reading skills.
>
> **Fourth**, learn and practice the skill of reading critically. To learn more, see Reading Critically in the “Writing about Texts” section.
>
> **Fifth**, keep reading. Yes, every day, putting your skills to work. (Practice makes perfect!)
>
> **Sixth**, well, you know.

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’ll be, the less time it will take, and the more you’ll enjoy the experience.

. . . . . .

People who read effectively use a variety of skills and techniques:

- They start by creating an optimal setting for reading. They pick the best time, place, and conditions.
- They engage in pre-reading strategies before starting to read (see pre-reading strategies later in this section)
- They read material efficiently: they pick up a piece of material, engage actively with it, and finish.
- They create a reading environment that helps decrease distraction.
- They annotate written texts (in other words, they write directly *on* the texts) or take notes as they read. By doing this, they enter into a discussion with the text, interacting with it.
- They research or investigate content they don’t fully understand.
- They work to discover the central meaning of the piece. They ask themselves
  - 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?
- They reflect on what the text means to them, 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?

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2.2: Create an Optimal Setting for Reading

Stop for a moment and think about yourself and the act of reading. Whether you read headlines or social media posts on a smartphone or tablet, love to settle in with the Sunday paper, devour stacks of hand-held magazines and hard copy books, or read only when forced to, what does reading look like for you?

- Consider your ideal spot for reading. Is it a favorite chair in your living room? Your bed? A coffee shop? The cool green grass in a local park?
- What's your favorite time of day for reading?
- Do you read best in silence? Or do you like to have music playing, be around other people, or have some other sort of active distraction?
- Do you prefer hard copy (printed) books, e-books, or audiobooks?

In each case, think about why you're making each of these choices.

For instance, many college students read and study late into the night, perhaps because that's the time they have available after work and family responsibilities or maybe because they've heard from others that all college students tend to study in the wee hours. Simple truth: not everyone reads most effectively at 2:00 am—or at 2:00 pm, for that matter. That's not to say some people don't do their best work late at night; the point is simply to really try and find when you study best—and then to make use of that.

Also, you may already know that the human body works via a series of diurnal cycles—cycles that move through peaks and valleys over each twenty-four hour period. During these cycles, levels of circulating hormones and chemicals rise and fall. Typically, this starts with a big chemical "push awake" in the morning, a peak of energy in the afternoon, and then a gradual lowering through the evening. Understanding these cycles can be helpful in finding effective times to read and study. This is important because as a college student, you'll be doing lots of reading and studying, and if you can find the time at which these activities are most effective, you can cut your reading/study time in half while also finding it's more enjoyable. And who wouldn't like to spend less time studying? (I know, right?)

Location is important, too. Some folks work best in an absolutely silent setting, while others prefer the background noise of people, music, etc. You may find you read most effectively on your couch, in a library, or in a lawn chair in your backyard. My point here is that you shouldn't just assume that a certain time and place are best for you. Experiment, trying out different settings for reading until you find the combination you know is best.

Once you've found that perfect setting, use it. Develop a routine of reading and studying at about the same time and in the same place as much as you can. Doing this will help the activity become a habit, and once that happens, it will be even easier—and more effective.

Here is a suggestion for those students with children, family obligations, pets, and other responsibilities: you may find you'll need to remove yourself from your usual daily setting in order to get your reading done. We've heard many stories of people who can't work at home because their dog, child, or partner are constantly interrupting them. This can be well-meaning, but even so, being interrupted when trying to read or study more or less destroys the process. Don't hesitate to escape to a local coffee shop, a campus library (fact: most college libraries are open to the public), or another safe spot to get your work done. If you're in an optimal setting, you'll finish faster—and then you can get back to whatever else is on your list.

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2.3: Use Pre-reading Strategies



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When you're ready to settle in with a text, it's a good idea to begin with "pre-reading." With pre-reading, you'll turn into a temporary sleuth, examining the text for visual clues as to its meaning. Here's how it's done:

Start by Reading and Considering the Title

A good title will inform you about the text's content. It's always nice if titles are also interesting, catchy, or even clever, but the most important job of a title is to let the reader know what's coming and what the text will be about.

For instance, imagine you're reading a magazine article entitled "Three Hundred Sixty-five Properly Poofy Days."*

Reading that, do you have any idea what this article is going to be about?

- It could be written by a meteorologist, reporting on a year of observing cloud formations.
- It might be a biopic (a biographical story) about an eccentric salon that specializes in"big hair" dos, retro-style.
- Or perhaps it's a set of guidelines for using poofy cotton balls to apply cosmetics.

Would you be surprised to discover it's a story about a dog groomer who does show grooms for poodles, the poofiest of dogs?

See my point? The title should, hopefully, give you clues to the article content. (Keep this in mind when you're writing your own titles.)

- **Look at the author's name** Have you heard of the author? Do you know anything about them? Sometimes you'll find a short bio about the author at the beginning or end of a text. You can always Google them to look for more details. Ideally, the author should be an acknowledged expert on the subject or should have degrees, training, or credentials that make them an expert. (Learn more about the CRAP method for evaluating sources in the information literacy section titled "Finding Quality Texts.")
- **Skim through the article, looking for headings or "pull-outs"** (content that is pulled off to one side or highlighted in a box). Headings, if present, will often give you clues as to the text's content as well as showing you how the subject has been divided into sections.
- **Look for any images: photographs, charts, graphs, maps, or other illustrations**. Images—and their captions—will often give you valuable information about the topic.
- **If working with an e-text, you may also find embedded web links**. Follow these: they'll often lead you to resources that will help you better understand the article.
- **Here's a seriously expert level suggestion**: most academic texts and essays follow a fairly similar structure—including beginning every paragraph with a strong, focused topic sentence—you can often get a quick summary or understanding of a written text by simply reading the first sentence in every paragraph. Some authors may use the second sentence as their topic sentence, and if you notice this pattern, reading all of the second sentences in each paragraph will help you follow the text.

After working through the above suggestions, see if you can figure out the main purpose of the text simply by pre-reading. In other words, look for the global or central idea or argument.

Now, you're ready to dive in and actually read the text completely. Your pre-reading has given you an overall picture of what to expect and helped you build a schema of what the author wants you to know at the end of the reading. If the pre-reading has worked well, giving you clues to the text's content, your actual in-depth reading will be easier and more effective. And, you'll begin reading with your curiosity already aroused, which is a great way to start!



Check Your Understanding:

Practicing Your Pre-reading Skills

Now that we've covered some pre-reading practices, let's put those skills to the test.

Find the *Scientific American* article, "U.S. Cracking Down on Brain-Training Games."

1. Before reading the article, work through the above pre-reading skills.
2. Based on what you found in your pre-reading, what do you think the text is about? What position will the article take on the idea of brain-training games? How much do you know about the topic already? What did you already know (before you even looked at the article)?
3. Now, switch to in-depth reading and read the article carefully, taking notes of any questions you have or words you don't understand.
4. If needed, do a bit of quick research on any questions or unknown words you identified.
5. How did the pre-reading affect your ideas of what to expect from the text? How did your understanding of the piece compare between what you learned from pre-reading versus a complete reading? What does this tell you about the relationship between pre-reading and in-depth reading?

See the Appendix, Results for the "Check Your Understanding" Activities, for answers.

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2.4: Read Efficiently

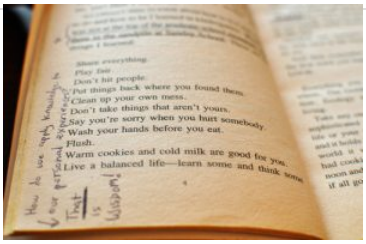
Sit down (in your ideal setting and at your ideal time, if possible) and prepare to read. Do whatever you need to do to minimize distractions during your reading session. (This may include putting your smartphone and other technology in another room.) Have paper and pencil available to take notes.

Read carefully, stopping and rereading sections you don't quite understand. Be sure to look up words you're not familiar with. This is important! Most of us are good contextual readers; that is, we can usually figure out what an unfamiliar word means based on the content around it. But in your academic, college-level writing, every word is important, and some words carry enough power to change the meaning of a sentence or to launch it into a whole new level of detail. Also, some words have different meanings in the academic setting than in our more casual everyday lives. When you hit a word you don't know, stop, make a note in the margin (or on a piece of paper), and look it up. If you find that stopping to look up individual words is too distracting, you can make a list of all the unknown words you run into and then look them all up when you've finished reading.

Keep reading until you're done. Don't be distracted. If you begin to feel fidgety, stop, get up, and take a five minute break. Then get back to your reading. The more you read, the stronger your habit will grow, and the easier reading will be.

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2.5: Annotate and Take Notes



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As children, most of us were told never to write in books, but now that you're a college student, your teachers will tell you just the opposite. Writing in your texts as you read—annotating them—is encouraged! It's a powerful strategy for engaging with a text and entering a discussion with it. You can jot down questions and ideas as they come to you. You might underline important sections, circle words you don't understand, and use your own set of symbols to highlight portions that you feel are important. Capturing these ideas as they occur to you is important, for they may play a role in not just understanding the text better but also in your college assignments. If you don't make notes as you go, today's great observation will likely become tomorrow's forgotten detail.

> Important note: most college and university bookstores approve of textual annotation and don't think it decreases a textbook's value. In other words, you can annotate a college textbook and still sell it back to the bookstore later on if you choose to. Note that I say most—if you have questions about your own school and plan to sell back any textbooks, be sure to ask at the bookstore before you annotate.

If you can't write on the text itself, you can accomplish almost the same thing by taking notes—either by hand (on paper) or e-notes. You might also choose to use sticky notes to capture your ideas—these can be stuck to specific pages for later recall. For a strategy that helps you take note of what you see as interesting or important points of a text while also responding to those points with your own ideas, see "Dialectic Note-taking" in the "Writing about Texts" section of this text.

Many students use brightly-colored highlighting pens to mark up texts. These are better than nothing, but in truth, they're not much help. Using them creates big swaths of eye-popping color in your text, but when you later go back to them, you may not remember why they were highlighted. Writing in the text with a simple pen or pencil is always preferable.



When annotating, choose pencil or ball-point ink rather than gel or permanent marker. Ball point ink is less likely to soak through the page. If using erasable pens, test in an inconspicuous area to make sure they actually erase on that paper.

What about e-books? Most of them have on-board tools for note-taking as well as providing dictionaries and even encyclopedia access.

Many students also like to keep reading journals. A good way to use these is to write a quick summary of your reading immediately after you've finished. Capture the reading's main points and discuss any questions you had or any ideas that were raised. Include the author and title, and write out an MLA citation for the source (see the appendix, Creating a Works Cited Page).



Check Your Understanding:

Annotation

Print a hard copy* of the New York Times article, "Are We Loving Our National Parks to Death?"

Pre-read the article to gather some first impression ideas. Then read the article completely, annotating as you go.

*If you aren't able to print a hard copy, carry out the following instructions using a piece of paper and a pen or pencil.

1. Double-underline what you believe to be the topic or thesis statement in the article. (The thesis statement is one or two sentences that summarizes the article's main point and tells what it's about. The thesis statement can occur anywhere in the article—even near the end.)
2. As you read, underline points that you find especially interesting. Make notes in the margins as ideas occur to you.
3. Write question marks in the margin where questions occur to you, and make written margin notes about them, too.
4. Circle all words you don't understand. Then look them up! (Dictionary.com is a good online dictionary and even pronounces words so you'll know how they sound.)
5. When you're finished, write a quick summary—several sentences or a short paragraph—that captures the article's main points.

See the Appendix, Results for the "Check Your Understanding" Activities, for answers.

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2.6: Do Quick Research

As you read, you might run into ideas, words, or phrases you don't understand, or the text might refer to people, places, or events you're unfamiliar with. It's tempting to skip over those and keep reading, and sometimes that actually works. But keep in mind that when you read something written by a professional writer or academic, they've written with such precision that every word carries meaning and contributes to the whole. Therefore, skipping over words or ideas could change the meaning of the text or leave the meaning incomplete.

When you're reading and come to words and ideas you're unfamiliar with, you may want to stop and take a moment to do a bit of quick research. Google is a great tool for this—plug in the idea or word and see what comes up. Keep on digging until you have an answer, and then, to help retain the information, take a minute to write a note about it.

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2.7: Discover What a Text is Trying to Say

All texts—whether fiction or nonfiction—carry layers of information, built one on top of the other. As we read, we peel those back—like layers in an onion—and uncover deeper meanings.

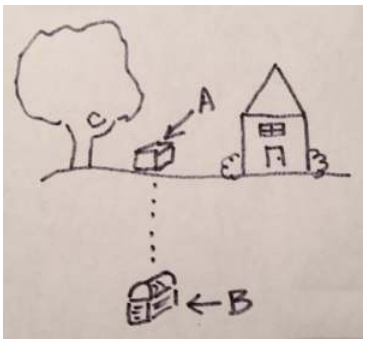


Figure 1, Hidden Meaning

Take a look at Figure 1 to the right. I use this in the classroom to explain the "deeper meaning" concept to students. All texts and stories have surface meaning. In the sketch, this is represented by all the things we see above ground: the tree, the house, and the box (A), along with whatever is in it—even though the box may be closed, anyone who walks by can see it and explore it. These items are concrete and obvious. In "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," for example, the surface story is about a little girl who goes for a walk in the forest, wanders into the bears' home, gets into their belongings, and is frightened off.

But stories and essays also have deeper, hidden meanings. In Figure 1, there's a buried treasure chest (B) deep underground, waiting to be discovered and opened. Texts are much the same—they each contain obvious, surface level meanings, and they each contain a buried prize as well. What's the deeper meaning in "Goldilocks"? Most fables and fairy tales were designed to teach, warn, or scare. Perhaps the author wants us to think about what happens when we invade people's privacy. Or maybe it's about the drawbacks of curiosity. What do you think?

When working with a text, be aware of everything that is happening within it—almost as if you're watching a juggler with several balls in the air at one time:

- Consider the characters or people featured in the text, their dialog, and how they interact.
- Be aware of the plot's movement (in a fictional story) or the topic development (in a nonfiction story or essay) and the moments of excitement or conflict as the action rises and falls.
- Look for changes in time—flashbacks, flash-forwards, and dream sequences.
- Watch for themes (ideas that occur, reappear, and carry meaning or a message throughout the piece) or symbols (objects or ideas that stand for or mean something else; these carry meaning that we often understand quickly without thinking about it too much).

  Examples of themes: coming of age, redemption, the nature of honesty, conflict, sacrifice.

  Examples of symbols: full moon (typically suggests mystery), dark forest (danger or the possibility of being lost), white flag (surrender), a path or road (journey).

As you read, always look for both surface meanings and those buried beneath the surface, like treasure. That's the fun part of reading—finding those precious hidden bits, waiting to be uncovered and eager to make your reading experience richer and deeper. Even if you just scratch the surface, you'll learn more.

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2.8: Explore the Ways the Text Affects You

When you work with a text, you enter into a conversation with it, responding with your thoughts, ideas, and feelings. The way each of us responds to any text has a lot to do with who we are: our age, education, cultural background, religion, ethnicity, and so forth.

As you explore a text, be aware of how you're responding to it.

- Are you reading or exploring easily and fluidly, or are you finding it difficult to navigate the text? Why do you believe this is so?
- Do you find yourself responding with some sort of strong emotion? If so, why do you think that may be happening?
- Do formatting or structural issues (examples: unusual use of punctuation, use of dialect or jargon) affect your navigation of the text?
- Can you identify with the text's central idea or the information it's sharing?
- Have you had any experiences like those being described? Can you identify with the story?
- Are you able to identify the surface meaning?
- Have you explored the text's deeper, hidden messages?
- Do you need to look up any words to do any quick research? If so, does this help you better understand the text?
- What questions do you have about the work?

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2.9: Reflect



Water reflection by Yuma Hori is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Whenever you finish a bit of college reading, it's worth your time to stop and reflect on it. This not only helps you think about the content and what it means to you, but it also helps cement it within your memory, allowing you to recall the key ideas later and to apply them in other reading and writing situations.

Here are two ideas for post-reading reflection:

- Write in a personal reading journal.
- Angelo and Cross suggest writing a "minute paper." To do this, take one minute to jot down a few sentences about something you learned or discovered while reading. Or ask yourself a question about the reading and write an answer. (See the entry for Angelo and Cross in the Appendix, "Works Cited in This Text.")



Check Your Understanding:

Reflecting on What You've Read

First, read the *New York Times* article, "Period. Full Stop. Point. Whatever It's Called, It's Going Out of Style" by Dan Bilefsky (found at www.nytimes.com).

Next, write a minute paper (see description above) by jotting down a few sentences in response to one of these questions:

- Do you agree with the idea that the period is going out of style? Why or why not?
- Do you agree that ending a text message with a period affects the meaning of the message? Explain.
- What does the author mean when he suggests that leaving the period out of text messages is the "the punctuation equivalent of stagehands who dress in black to be less conspicuous"?

See the Appendix, Results for the "Check Your Understanding" Activities, for answers.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Writing about Texts

3.10: Critiquing a Text
3.11: Drawing Conclusions, Synthesizing, and Reflecting
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3.10: Critiquing a Text

Let's review:

- When we **summarize** a text, we capture its main points.
- When we **analyze** a text, we consider how it has been put together—we dissect it, more or less, to see how it works

Here's a new term: when we **critique** (crih-TEEK) a text, we evaluate it, asking it questions. Critique shares a root with the word "criticize." Most of us tend to think of criticism as being negative or mean, but in the academic sense, doing a critique is not the least bit negative. Rather, it's a constructive way to better explore and understand the material we're working with. The word's origin means "to evaluate," and through our critique, we do a deep evaluation of a text. (see the glossary of terms).

When we critique a text, we interrogate it. Imagine the text, sitting on a stool under a bright, dangling light bulb while you ask, in a demanding voice, "What did you mean by having Professor Mustard wear a golden yellow fedora?"

Okay, seriously. When we critique, our own opinions and ideas become part of our textual analysis. We question the text, we argue with it, and we delve into it for deeper meanings.

Here are some ideas to consider when critiquing a text:

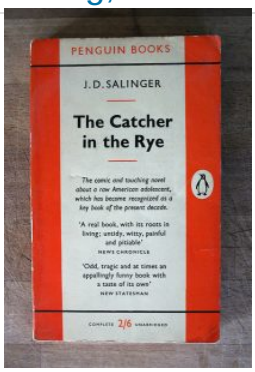
- How did you respond to the piece? Did you like it? Did it appeal to you? Could you identify with it?
- Do you agree with the main ideas in the text?
- Did you find any errors in reasoning? Any gaps in the discussion?
- Did the organization make sense?
- Was evidence used correctly, without manipulation? Has the writer used appropriate sources for support?
- Is the author objective? Biased? Reasonable? (Note that the author might just as easily be subjective, unbiased, and unreasonable! Every type of writing and tone can be used for a specific purpose. By identifying these techniques and considering *why* the author is using them, you begin to understand more about the text.)
- Has the author left anything out? If yes, was this accidental? Intentional?
- Are the text's tone and language text appropriate?
- Are all of the author's statements clear? Is anything confusing?
- What worked well in the text? What was lacking or failed completely?
- What is the cultural context* of the text?

    *Cultural context is a fancy way of asking who is affected by the ideas and who stands to lose or gain if the ideas take place. When you think about this, think of all kinds of social and cultural variables, including age, gender, occupation, education, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, and so forth.

These are only a few ideas relating to critique, but they'll get you started. When you critique, try working with these statements, offering explanations to support your ideas. Bring in content from the text (textual evidence) to support your ideas.

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3.11: Drawing Conclusions, Synthesizing, and Reflecting



J.D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye photo by Andy Field is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Synthesizing

To **synthesize** is to combine ideas and create a completely *new* idea. That new idea becomes the conclusion you have drawn from your reading. This is the true beauty of reading: it causes us to weigh ideas, to compare, judge, think, and explore—and then to arrive at a moment that we hadn't known before. We begin with simple **summary**, work through **analysis**, evaluate using **critique**, and then move on to **synthesis**.

For example, many people read J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* at some point during their lives, often during high school. The book focuses on an angsty, rebellious teen who relates aspects of his teenage experiences, and he does this from his room in a mental institution. In the end, the teen understands more about himself and the world, and he begins to consider his possible future.

Many teens read this story and see themselves in it; grappling with the ideas in the text helps them better understand themselves and often encourages them to reach for their own futures. This is an example of how they draw their own conclusions from the text and synthesize their own directions and ideas.

Most of us can point to one or two books that have been life-changing—books that have held us captive for a moment in time and shaped our outlook. These are moments of synthesis. If this hasn't happened to you yet, grab a good book (ask a teacher or librarian if you need suggestions), pour a cup of tea, and start reading.

Reflecting

After a period of critical reading, it's time to reflect. Go back to the earlier discussion in the "Reflect" section (see "Building Strong Reading Skills" in the table on contents). Make some spontaneous notes, write in a writing journal, create a minute paper, or in some way write a few words that capture your experience.

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3.1: Reading Critically



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As you take on a broader range of writing assignments in your college classes, it can be helpful to read as a writer, often called reading to write. “Reading to write” means approaching reading material with a variety of tools that help prepare you to write about that reading material. These tools can include things like previewing related assignments or lectures prior to reading, specific note-taking methods while reading, and ways of thinking about and organizing the information after completing the reading.

. . . . . .

As we have learned in the “Building Strong Reading Skills” section of this text, critical reading is effective reading taken to the next step, but now we’re going to talk about how to use those reading skills to help us write about the texts we read. Instead of simply reading for your own purposes, you now will also read through the writer’s eyes, seeking to understand the deeper, interwoven meanings layered within a text. Critical reading involves the reader in grappling with the text—interacting with it.

The critical reader digs in and explores a text. They do some or all of the following:

- **They analyze the structure of the piece**. What kind of organization does it follow? Where is the thesis? What types of sentences and language are used? How are the paragraphs structured?
- **They analyze the text itself**, either exploring its content or its use of rhetoric, i.e., the ways the text uses language to make its message effective.
- **They capture the text’s main points** by summarizing its meaning.
- **They critique the text**, passing judgment on its effectiveness.
- **They reach conclusions** (make inferences) about the text.
- **They combine their own ideas with the textual analysis** to synthesize new ideas and insights.

You’ll begin, of course, by reading the text. Work your way through the suggestions in the “Read Effectively” section, found in the larger “Building Strong Reading Skills” section of this text.

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3.2: Exploring the Structure of a Text

Exploring a text's structure may sound a little complicated, but it really isn't. We're simply looking for how it's been constructed or built, and then we're thinking about how the structure supports the work the text is trying to do. The fancy literary terms for this are "form" and "function." Form refers to the way the text is structured, while function refers to what it communicates to the reader.

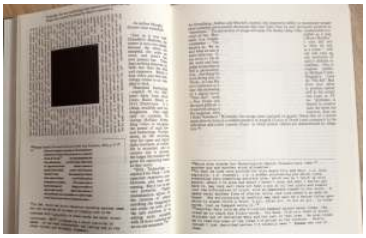
Consider these questions when thinking about structure:

- How is the text organized? (Does it seem logical? Is it in time-related, chronological order? Does it skip around in time with flashbacks or flash-forwards?)
- Is it divided into obvious sections? Do the sections have headings, or are they just visually separated?
- Does the author use comparison/contrast, explore cause and effect, or examine a process to present their ideas?
- Is there a lot of detail and description in the text?

  Does the author use dialog?

- Does the author do anything unusual* or unexpected with the text?

*Speaking of unusual texts, sometimes the author will do something unexpected with the text's form in order to support its function. As an example, check out these examples from Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, a novel that includes some extraordinary structures.



Pages from Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves

In the example shown to the right here, you can see some of the unusual ways Danielewski has arranged text on two of the pages. His book contains all sorts of different textual anomalies (something that deviates from the usual or standard approach); if you want to see more of them, go to Google and search for 'House of Leaves' and then 'images.' Throughout the text, his creativity with the textual layout echoes and supports what is happening within the story. It's ridiculously cool, and if you're curious about it, I recommend reading it. It's a weird but worthwhile reading experience, and it brings home the idea of textual structure like nothing else can.

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3.3: Dialectic Note-taking

A dialectical approach to taking notes sounds much more complicated than it is. A dialectic is just a dialogue, a discussion between two (or more) voices trying to figure something out. Whenever we read new material, particularly material that is challenging in some way, it can be helpful to take dialectic notes to create clear spaces for organizing these different sets of thoughts.

Creating Dialectic Notes

Start by drawing a vertical line down the middle of a fresh sheet of paper to make two long columns.

The Left Column

This column will be a straightforward representation of the main ideas in the text you are reading (or viewing). In it, you will note things like

- What are the author's main points in this section?
- What kind of support is the author using in this section?
- Other points of significant interest?
- Note the source and page number, if any, so that you can find and document this source later

You can directly quote these points, but do write them down as you encounter them, not after the fact. If you quote directly, use quotation marks; if you paraphrase, do not use quotation marks. Be consistent so that you don't make more work for yourself when you start writing your draft. For more guidance with writing summaries, paraphrasing, and quoting, see the "Drafting" section of this text.

The Right Column

The right column will be the questions and connections you make as you encounter this author's ideas. This might include

- Questions you want to ask in class
- Bigger-picture questions you might explore further in writing
- Connections to other texts you've read or viewed for this class
- Connections to your own personal experiences
- Connections to the world around you (issues in your community, stories on the news, or texts you've read or viewed outside of this class)

Bottom of the Page

It is often a good idea to leave space at the bottom of the page (or on the back) for additional notes about this piece you may want to write down based on what your instructor has to say about it or for comments and questions your peers make about it during class discussion.

Example

Once you've finished the text and have taken your dialectic notes while reading it, you might have something that looks a bit like this (for the sake of the example, I read a story I'd never read before from an author I'm familiar with, so you could see genuine reactions to a first read):

Dialectical Notes for Bradbury's "The Last Night of the World"

What it says	Questions/Connections
"What would you do if you knew this was the last night of the world?"	It feels so strange to start a story with a character asking a direct question in dialogue . . . can't decide if it draws me in or not.
"You don't mean it?" said his wife.	The slow reveal of who these characters are, their relationship to each other, even how many are talking is interesting. I wonder why Bradbury chose to reveal them this way.
Long paragraph about his dream and Stan.	Weird! And a little creepy . . . I wonder why the shared dreams, & how many others are hearing the same one.

Dialectical Notes for Bradbury's "The Last Night of the World" - Page 2

What it says	Questions/Connections
This is logical.	What? Not a single thing about this is logical! Not even the further explanation makes logical sense
February 30, 1951	Okay, so . . . alternate timeline? The world ending on a day that never has, never will exist?
The discussion about whether the children know.	Why wouldn't the children have had the same dream?

Notes during class:

. . .

Once you have this set of dialectic notes, there are a number of ways you can use them. Here are a few:

- They can help you contribute to class discussion about this piece and the topics it addresses.
- Significant questions you encountered while reading are already written down and collected in one place so you don't have to sift back through the reading to re-discover those questions.
- These notes provide a place where many of your observations and thoughts about the piece are already organized, which can help you see patterns and connections within those observations. Finding these connections can be a strong starting point for written assignments.
- If you are asked to respond to this piece in writing, these notes can serve as a reference point as you develop a draft. They can give you new ideas if you get stuck and help keep the original connections you saw when reading fresh in your mind as you respond more formally to that reading.

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3.4: Analyzing Content and Rhetoric

When we talk about rhetoric (REH-torr-ick), we're talking about the ways we write and speak effectively and persuasively. We use rhetoric to explain, to describe, and to argue or persuade (see the glossary of terms).

In developing your reading and analysis skills, always think about what you're reading, questioning the text—and your responses—as you read. Use the following questions to help analyze as you assess the text's content and the ways it makes its points. Think of it as taking the text apart—dissecting it to see how it works:

- **What is the author's main point?** Describe this in your own words. Do they make the point successfully? Is the point held consistently throughout the text, or does it wander at any point?
- **What information does the author provide to support the central idea?** Making a list of each point will help you analyze. Hint: each paragraph should address one key point, and all paragraphs should relate to the text's central idea.
- **What kind of evidence does the author use?** Is it based more on fact or opinion, and do you feel those choices are effective? Where does this evidence come from? Are the sources authoritative and credible? (Learn more about the CRAP method for evaluating sources in the section titled "Finding Quality Texts.")
- **What is the author's main purpose?** Note that this is different that the text's main idea. The text's main idea (above) refers to the central claim or thesis embedded in the text. The author's purpose, however, refers to what they hope to accomplish. For example, a cookbook is assembled in order to share recipes and cooking methods. But perhaps the author also wanted to include a group of treasured family recipes in hopes of sharing them with a wider cooking audience. The text has one purpose, while the author has an additional aim for the work.
- **Describe the tone in the piece.** Is it friendly? Authoritative? Does it lecture? Is it biting or sarcastic? Does the author use simple language, or is it full of jargon? Does the language feel positive or negative? Point to aspects of the text that create the tone; spend some time examining these and considering how and why they work. (Learn more about tone in in the section titled "Tone, Voice, and Point of View.")
- **Is the author objective, or does he/she try to convince you to have a certain opinion?** Why does the author try to persuade you to adopt this viewpoint? If the author is biased, does this interfere with the way you read and understand the text?
- **Do you feel like the author knows who you are?** Does the text seem to be aimed at readers like you or at a different audience? What assumptions does the author make about their audience? Would most people find these reasonable, acceptable, or accurate?
- **Does the text's flow make sense?** Is the line of reasoning logical? Are there any gaps? Are there any spots where you feel the reasoning is flawed in some way?
- **Does the author try to appeal to your emotions?** Does the author use any controversial words in the headline or the article? Do these affect your reading or your interest?
- **Do you believe the author?** Do you accept their thoughts and ideas? Why or why not?



Check Your Understanding: Jargon

Jargon refers to language, abbreviations, or terms that are used by specific groups— typically those people involved in a profession. Using jargon within that group makes conversation simpler, and it works because everyone in the group knows the lingo.

The problem with using jargon when writing is that if your reader has no idea of what those terms mean, you'll lose them.

1. **Read this paragraph that relies heavily on jargon**:

   Those who experience sx of URI might consider visiting a PCP. This should happen ASAP with pyrexia >101, enlarged cervical nodes, purulent nares drainage, or tonsillar hypertrophy. Tx may include qid antibios, ASA, fluids, and a mucolytic.

2. **Now read this translation in lay (non-jargon) terms**:
   Those who have cold symptoms might consider visiting their primary care provider. This should happen quickly if there is fever over 101, swollen glands in the neck, green or yellow drainage from the nose, or inflamed, swollen tonsils. Treatment may include antibiotics, aspirin, fluids, and medications designed to loosen phlegm and make it easier to cough.
   That's quite a change, yes? It's a good example of why we usually want to avoid jargon, only use it with an audience that understands it, or explain each term carefully as we use them.
3. **What did you discover about jargon?** What areas are you familiar with that may have their own types of jargon? Write a paragraph that discusses your experience with or ideas about this topic.

See the Appendix, Results for the "Check Your Understanding" Activities, for answers.

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3.5: Sentence-Level Analysis

Sometimes it can be helpful to examine the way sentences are used in a text. Ask the question, what is making the sentences work? Let's consider a few ideas.

Begin by considering the sentence length. Is the text comprised of mostly short sentences, mostly long (or really long) sentences, or a mixture of both?

Short sentences are a perfectly fine addition to any essay work. But if overused, they can feel boring and monotonous.

> I needed to be at work early. I set my alarm for 5:00 am. It went off on time, and I got up. I showered and dressed. I ate cereal for breakfast. I had orange juice, too. My drive to work went well. I only hit three lights. Traffic wasn't bad. I found a good parking place at work. I walked into the office early.



> Try reading these examples aloud. This will help you "hear" their flow in a way you cannot by simply reading silently with eyes alone. Reading aloud is really the only way to hear the sound of writing.

In the above example, every one of those sentences is correct and perfectly legal in terms of grammar and structure. But how does it sound? A little choppy? Repetitive? Flat?

Now let's look at the same paragraph, adjusted to combine the short sentences into much longer ones—and again, read it aloud:

> I needed to be at work early, so I set my alarm for 5:00 am. It went off on time, and I got up, showered, dressed, ate cereal for breakfast, and had orange juice, too. My drive to work went well because I only hit three lights, traffic wasn't bad, I found a good parking place at work, and I walked into the office early.

Once again, each of the sentences in the above example is grammatically correct. But how does the sample sound now? It seems to go on and on for a bit, doesn't it? Longer sentences—especially once after another—can be a little hard to follow.

Let's see if we can find a happy medium, creating a paragraph that includes both long and short sentences (yes, read it aloud again, please):

> I needed to be at work early, so I set my alarm for 5:00 am. It went off on time. I got up, showered, dressed, and had cereal and orange juice for breakfast. My drive to work went well. I only hit three lights, and traffic wasn't bad. I found a good parking place at work and walked into the office early.

You'll probably agree that the final sample has the best, most fluid sound. Why? When we humans speak, we tend to speak in a mixture of long sentences, short sentences, and incomplete sentences—not to mention single words and short phrases. Thus, when we use varying sentence lengths in our writing, it sounds more conversational to our ear. Reading text composed of mixed-length sentences is both easier to do and easier to understand.

That said, sentence length can be used to create specific effects, too. Long, complicated sentences are often used in description or to create a rhythmic, flowing feel. In contrast, short sentences may be used for emphasis or to ramp up a feeling of anxiety or suspense.



Check Your Understanding:

Sentence Length

Consider this long sentence from the children's book, *Stuart Little*, by E.B. White:

In the loveliest town of all, where the houses were white and high and the elm trees were green and higher than the houses, where the front yards were wide and pleasant and the back yards were bushy and worth finding out about, where the streets sloped down to the stream and the stream flowed quietly under the bridge, where the lawns ended in orchards and the orchards ended in fields and the fields ended in pastures and the pastures climbed the hill and disappeared over the top toward the wonderful wide sky, in this loveliest of all towns Stuart stopped to get a drink of sarsaparilla.

1. The above passage is a single, long, complex sentence and is grammatically correct. How did you feel when you read it? What kind of mood or tone did it create? Could you imagine the place being described?
2. Now, consider this excerpt from a piece by Ben Montgomery, written as he covered a state football championship:

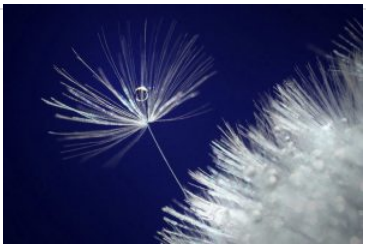
   "Complete pass. Again. Clock's ticking. Again. Down the field they go. The kid can't miss. The Panthers are nearing the end zone….The whole place is on its feet. Ball's on the 5-yard line. Marve takes the snap. Drops back. Throws."

3. Montgomery's piece is built of short sentences, sentence fragments, and even single words. How did you feel when you read this? What kind of mood or tone did it create? Can you hear the difference from the *Stuart Little* passage?
4. What have you discovered about the effect of sentence length?
5. Try your hand at playing with sentence length. Imagine the most beautiful place you've ever been. Write a few lines that describe the place. Aim for writing long, flowing sentences that include lots of sensory description: sight, sound, texture, etc. Now imagine something you've done that made you anxious or frightened. Write a few sentences that recreate the scene and sensations. Use short, abrupt sentences to ramp up the tension.

See the Appendix, Results for the "Check Your Understanding" Activities, for answers.

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3.6: Point of View



Water drop in a dandelion seed by photophilde is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Point of view (PoV) refers to the writer's perspective as they explain what's happening around them or tell a story. We describe writing as being in the first, second, or third person.

First person PoV

First person PoV uses pronouns like **I, me, us, our,** and **we**.

- When you read a passage written in first person, it's as if you're inside that person's head, seeing through their eyes. You think what they think, see what they see, and know what they know.
- The **strength** of first person is in the way it shares emotional intensity. We *feel* what the narrator feels. We respond to events along with them.
- The **weakness** of first person is its lack of significant information. We only know what the narrator knows; we can't get into the heads of other characters who are nearby. We also only see what that narrator sees; we can't see what else is going on around them or even around the next bend in the road. The first person narrator's knowledge of all the story's events is limited.
- Writers tend to use first person when they want to convey emotional intensity, as in a personal narrative, or when they want us to know the narrator intimately.

Example

"I could picture it. I have a habit of imagining the conversations between my friends. We went out to the Cafe Napolitain to have an aperitif and watch the evening crowd on the Boulevard" (from Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*).

Second person PoV

Second person PoV uses pronouns like **you, your,** and **yourself**.

When you read a passage written in second person, it's as if the writer is talking directly to you.

- The **strength** of second person is in a direct connection with narrator and reader; when reading second person, you feel as if you're having a conversation with the narrator. This is especially effective when they are giving instructions.
- The **weakness** of second person is that it limits the audience by making it seem the narrator is talking to only one person. It can create a strange "dreamy" tone that may make the text feel strange. It can also feel aggressive or accusatory.
- Writers may use second person when they want to talk directly to one reader, give instructions, or create a dreamy or meditative passage.

Examples

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know" (from Dr. Seuss' *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*).

"You are walking through a forest…. It is peaceful…. You breathe deeply and slowly as you listen to the forest sounds around you…. You hear the sounds of leaves underfoot as you follow the path…. You find a fallen log…. You sit down" (meditation sequence).

"When you fill out the form, use a #2 pencil" (instructions).

Third person PoV

Third person PoV uses pronouns like **she, he, it, them,** and **their** and omits "I."

- When you read a passage written in third person, you experience a perspective that is all-seeing and all-knowing. A third person narrator can see past, present, and future; they can also know whatever any character knows as well as how that character feels and thinks. They have a full view of whatever is in front of, behind, beside, above, or below them. In short, they can see the entire scene. Third person is all about facts.
- The **strength** of third person is its ability to be informative. It sees all, knows all, and shares this with the reader. Because it does not use the "I" voice, it feels objective and smart.
- The **weakness** of third person is its lack of intimacy. It's focused on information and thus tells us little about emotion and feelings. We end up knowing a lot about the setting and events and not much about the human nature of the characters, what they're thinking, or what they plan to do next.
- Writers tend to use third person when they want to write objectively without sounding emotional or biased. Much college, research, and professional writing is done in third person. And note that there are a number of sub-forms of third person; you may hear more about these if you study creative writing.

Example

"The seller of lightning-rods arrived just ahead of the storm. He came along the street of Green Town, Illinois, in the late cloudy October day, sneaking glances over his shoulder. Somewhere not so far back, vast lightnings stomped the earth. Somewhere, a storm like a great beast with terrible teeth could not be denied" (from Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*).

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3.7: Word Choice



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Does the author use simple language that all readers understand? Or do they use language that contains complex language and may not be understood by all readers?

Simpler language can help make a text available to everyone. On the other hand, overly-simple language may frustrate some readers. Using more complex language allows a writer to add deeper layers of information and meaning to a text, and this can work if the audience is familiar with the language (or jargon) being used. But if they're not, they may find the text confusing, irritating, or even impossible to understand.

Do they do anything unusual with words or punctuation?

Sometimes writers do this in order to create a certain sound or dialect within a text. Dialect is a language or language-sound that is known by and particular to a specific group of people or a specific geographical region. For example, think about how people define a sweet carbonated drink as "pop," "soda," or "Coke" depending on what part of the U.S. they live in.

Consider this example from the book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee; it's set in the south and written in words that create a distinct dialect:

> "Reckon I have. Almost died first year I come to school and et them pecans—folks say he pizened 'em and put 'em over on the school side of the fence."
>
> **Translation**: "I suppose I have. I almost died the first year I came to school and ate those pecans. Folks say he [Mr. Radley] poisoned them and put them on the school's side of the fence."

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3.8: Paragraph Analysis

When exploring a text, consider the structure and arrangement of paragraphs. Follow the colors in the discussion and example below. *Note, if you have difficulty distinguishing between these colors or if you're not using a color copy of the text, the first shaded part identifies the topic sentence, the shaded part in the middle identifies the support, and the final shaded part identifies the transition.*

In terms of structure, an "academic" paragraph includes a topic sentence, which introduces* the paragraph's main idea. It then offers several sentences (or at least one, as a minimum) to support or explain the topic sentence. Finally, it concludes with a sentence that helps transition to the next paragraph.

*Note that the topic sentence is often, but not always, the first sentence in the paragraph. You'll hear more about that later. (For more about topic sentences see "Writing Paragraphs" in the "Drafting" section of this text.)

Here's an example:

> Single-use plastic water bottles cause dangerous substances to "leach" into the soil and water (Macklin). The bottles typically don't begin to break down for one hundred years, or even longer. Their decomposition may be speeded up by extreme weather conditions, e.g., very hot or very cold temperatures. As they break down, they release dangerous chemicals like bisphenol-A into the soil. Bisphenol-A is an endocrine disruptor, i.e., it can affect the levels of hormones within the human body, creating disease. In addition, BPA is known to be carcinogenic (cancer-causing) in humans. As these chemicals accumulate in the soil, they eventually sink into the water table, contaminating the water (O'Connor). Making these threats even more frightening is the fact that there is currently no known technology for removing BPA and other leachates from the soil and water once they're there.

Writers may choose to use short or long paragraphs to create specific effects—much the same as using short and long sentences. Short paragraphs can build tension or a sense of expectation, while long ones may create a "stream of consciousness" feeling, in which the narrator's thoughts, feelings, and reactions are given in a continuous, rambling flow.

The classic arrangement of paragraphs in a text may be described as "linear" or time-based. In other words, the narrator typically starts at the beginning and moves logically to the end. Sometimes a writer will use flashbacks, flash-forwards, or dream/imaginative sequences to affect the usual flow of time in the story or to provide additional information. For example, a flashback allows the reader to learn something about the story's past they wouldn't have known otherwise.

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3.9: Summarizing a Text



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When you finish reading a text, it's a great idea to stop for a moment and write a summary of what you just read.

A good summary accomplishes the following:

- It identifies or names the piece and its author(s) and states the main purpose of the text.
  Example: In his essay, "Consider the Lobster," writer David Foster Wallace asks readers to consider the ethical implications of feasting on lobsters. (You can find a copy of this essay online at gourmet.com.)
- It captures the text's main points.
- It does *not* include the reader's opinions, feelings, beliefs, counterarguments, etc.
- It is short. The idea of a summary is to "boil down" or condense a text to just a few sentences.

Most important of all, when you create a summary of a text, it helps you review what you read and helps your brain capture the main ideas. Writing these down cements the memories; this will help you recall them more easily later on.



Check Your Understanding: Summarizing a Text

Read "Replace Annual Physicals with Real-Time Biomarker Monitoring." (This article by Alex Berezow and Eric Tan can be found online at the *Scientific American* blog site.)

Write a summary of this text, using the above guidelines.

See the Appendix, Results for the “Check Your Understanding” Activities, for answers.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: What is Information Literacy?

4.1: Why is Information Literacy Important?

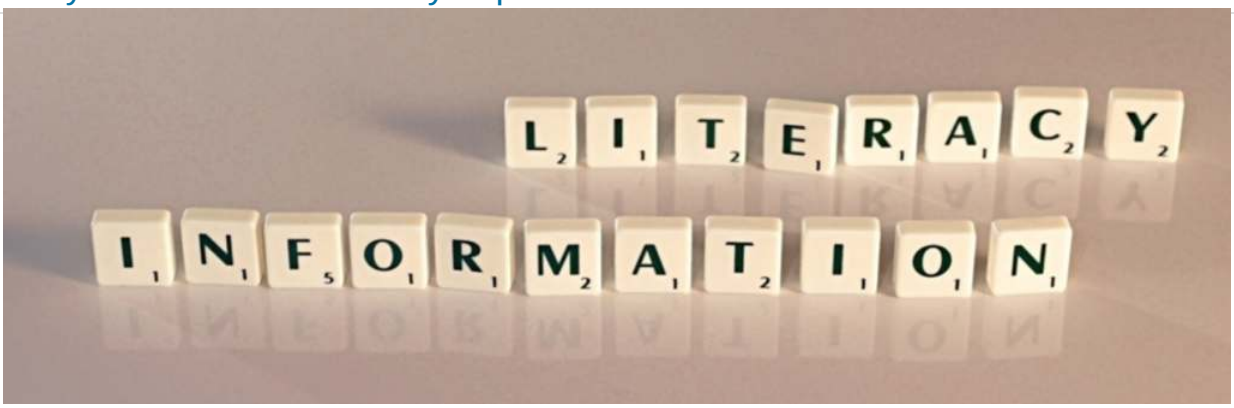
4.2: Finding Quality Texts

4.3: Learning About Plagiarism and Guidelines for Using Information

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4.1: Why is Information Literacy Important?



“Information Literacy” by Ewa Rozkosz is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

“Information literacy” is a term you’ll hear a lot during your college years. It means that all students (and all people, really) should be able to find and use reliable information and source materials and that they should be able to find the right material for whatever it is they’re doing or whatever questions they have (see the glossary of terms).

Finding dependable information is especially important in the digital/internet age, where millions of ideas can be discovered in half a second but where much of that information is outdated or worthless.

Handling the materials correctly is important, too; this includes giving full credit when using materials created by others.

Here are a few of the questions we’ll explore:

- Why is information literacy important and necessary?
- How can I learn to find reliable, high-quality information and texts?
- How can I build my reading skills?
- How can I read, understand, and use texts effectively?
- How can I use my reading skills as a springboard to writing?
- What is plagiarism, and how do I avoid it?
- How can I cite source materials correctly in my college work?

. . . . . .

As a college student, it’s important that you can find reliable sources for your class work and assignments. It’s also essential that you know how to correctly use and handle the sources when you make them part of your own work.

Outside of school, most of us also feel it’s important to be informed about current issues and ideas. Knowing what’s going on in the world is, arguably, a citizen’s responsibility. Plus, it feels good to join in a conversation and know the facts, or to be sure we’re sharing a meme, social media post, or news article that’s accurate and trustworthy.



Check Your Understanding: *Snopes*

Snopes is a widely respected, non-partisan site dedicated to investigating rumors, memes, social media statements, and news stories and then issuing decisions about whether the materials are correct or false.

Go to *Snopes*' "What's New" page—a page that updates daily and includes the latest rumors: http://www.snopes.com/whats-new/

Scroll through the list until you find an interesting hot topic. Click and read, then write a quick paragraph that summarizes what you found. What did you learn? Were you surprised?

If this captured your interest, you may want to explore *Snopes* a little more. It's a fun place to poke around and a great place to fact-check information.

As humans living in the digital age, we should know how to navigate the Web successfully, find the best materials, and evaluate and use them with confidence. Alas: in an age where a quick Google search nets millions of "hits" in half a second, evaluating the sources we choose can be trickier than it sounds. There's a lot of great material on the Web, but there's a lot of garbage, too. Being able to tell which is which is a digital-age-important life skill.

We also need to understand who "owns" information—whether hard copy (printed) or digital—and how and when to give credit to the owner: this keeps us safe from accidentally committing plagiarism.

Plagiarism occurs when we use someone else's "intellectual property" without giving them credit. Intellectual property is defined as material or ideas envisioned and created by another person. There are many kinds of intellectual property, including books, articles, essays, stories, poems, films, photographs, works of art or craft, or even just ideas. If someone else thought of an idea and brought it into the world, they own it, and if you use their idea in your work, you have to acknowledge them as the actual owner. If you don't? You've committed plagiarism. That's not a good idea—and we'll talk more about this in the "Learning about Plagiarism" section, later in this Information Literacy portion of the text.



Check Your Understanding:

Plagiarism

There are a number of different practices which could lead to or be defined as plagiarism, so it's important that you understand what constitutes plagiarism and what doesn't. Which of these would be a kind of plagiarism?

- Copying written material from the Web and pasting it into your paper so it would look like you wrote it.
- Overhearing someone's great idea while riding in an elevator and then later sharing the idea and saying it was yours.
- Finding a beautiful photograph on the Web and using it as your profile picture on social media without showing the photographer's name.
- Citing lines of poetry in a blog post without mentioning the poet.

See the Appendix, Results for the "Check Your Understanding" Activities, for answers.

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4.2: Finding Quality Texts

In the world of academia, our gold standard for texts requires them to be created by people with substantial education, advanced degrees, and life expertise, making them experts in their fields. If I'm reading a cookbook, I want it to be by someone who really knows their way around a kitchen—not someone who's a mediocre cook but decided it would be fun to collect the family favorites into a self-published book.

You're a college student. Without a doubt, the best place for you to find quality information is the college library—and you can do this by walking into the library or searching it via the Web. Many college libraries in the U.S. have adopted a new set of guidelines for helping students find good materials. It's called **CRAP**. Yes, really! CRAP stands for currency, reliability, authority, and purpose/point of view.

Let's look further at those words (CRAP):

Note: some libraries use **CRAAP** instead of **CRAP**, adding a second "A" for "accuracy." The simple **CRAP** method, below, incorporates "accuracy" into the "reliable" category. Besides, using **CRAP** is more fun.

C: Currency

- Is this the most recent material you can find?
- Is the material recent enough to accurately represent your topic?
- Has it been updated recently?
- For electronic sites, does the site appear modern and up to date?

R: Reliability

- Is the material objective?
- Can you detect any obvious bias or loaded language?
- Are sources available to back up the piece?
- Is it well written and free of errors?

A: Authority

- Does the author have degrees, experience, or other expertise in the topic area?
- Is the host source reliable, i.e., a respected newspaper versus an individual blog?
- Is the publisher reputable and well known?
- Do you have a sense of trust for the author?

P: Purpose and Point of View

- What is the material's creator trying to accomplish? Are they trying to inform? Persuade? Push their own agenda? Convince you to buy something?
- Does the site include advertising or click-bait?
- Does the article seemed aimed at a specific audience?

Sounds like our gold standard, yes? Keeping the metaphor going, your college library is a gold mine for students. Your college library

- Gives you access to a world of source materials that have already been reviewed and approved by the librarian staff.
- Allows you free database access that would be extremely expensive if purchased as a non-student. (For example, accessing an EBSCO online database—one of the best college research standards—online can cost $40-50 per article! Fortunately, the same article would be free through your college library.)
- Provides current, constantly updated sources.
- Allows you to obtain materials that your library may not have. How? Through a wonderful service called interlibrary loan, where your library will actually contact other libraries—all over the country!—to find the materials you need and get them to you.
- Provides study spaces, tutoring, research assistance, and other helps.

- Gives you access to librarians—the library's greatest resource. Where a library database can give you thousands of results in response to a search, the librarian can help you figure out where to start looking, or what search terms to use. They can answer any and all of your questions relating to research.

Wander into your college library (or search the library's online help) to get started—and if you have problems, ask a librarian! They love to work with students.

Can You Also Find Good Material on the World Wide Web?

Of course. But doing so can be tricky. Think for a moment. If you've found a website or resource you feel might be useful, how do you convince yourself that it follows the **CRAP** approach?

Keep in mind that your college work is different from your day to day activities. For instance, we may surf the Web for a number of different reasons, perhaps for pleasure, perhaps out of boredom, or maybe chasing links. We can search and read as we like; nothing is at stake, so to speak.

But in your college work, there's plenty at stake. Part of doing solid work at the college level has to do with finding strong source materials and using them correctly and effectively.

So, how do you find good material on the Web?

Finding good materials on the Internet takes a bit of detective work. You can use your **CRAP** detective skills, but it also helps to know a little something about how to navigate and use Web materials. Let's explore!

Domain name endings

The domain name ending refers to the letters that follow the period at the end of a Web address (also called a url, or uniform resource locator). For example, **.com, ,edu,** and **.org** are all domain name endings.

> Example of a Web address: www.cnn**.com**
>
> Example of a domain name ending: **.com**

Different domain name endings refer to different kinds of websites and can be related to the quality of the site's material. Therefore, you have to examine them to decide whether they're reliable. Here are some examples:

> **.com:** a commercial or personal site. These are generally considered to be some of the least reliable sources because anyone can create one and they're typically used for either private blogs, web pages, and other personal uses or for commercial purposes and sales. **(CRAP+/-, i.e., "CRAP positive or negative")**
>
> **.org:** these used to belong solely to non-profit sites, such as The American Cancer Society. But these days, anyone can purchase and use a .org site for any purpose. Thus the content on a .org site may vary widely in terms of its authority. **(CRAP+/-)**
>
> **.edu:** educational sites, usually maintained by colleges and universities but sometimes by high schools as well. These sites are considered to be very reliable. **(CRAP+)**
>
> **.gov** and **.mil:** government and military sites, maintained by the governments and the military. These sites are considered to be very reliable. (**CRAP+)**

Let's look at a couple of examples and see how they hold up to the **CRAP** method:

The noted food journalist Michael Pollan uses a .com site, michaelpollan.com, to host many of his writings. He's a respected writer and resource, and his .com site is a wonderful resource for anyone writing about food.

> **C:** Is it **current**? Yes, it is. He is continually adding new materials and updating the site.
>
> **R:** Is it **reliable?** Yes. Pollan uses sources and/or provides source lists for his writings. His work is objective and fact-based.
>
> **A:** Is it **authoritative**? Yes. Pollan provides an extensive biography and a list of his publications and honors. His work is widely respected throughout the publishing and journalism communities, and his books have been published by some of our best-known publishing companies.
>
> **P:** What is its **purpose**? Pollan is a journalist who tries to share science-based information about food and the food industry. He seeks to inform, and he does this with the intention of wanting to make people's lives better. He is addressing a vast audience: the American people.

Result? CRAP+

Let's try another one. The .org site, cellphonesafety.org may appear, at first glance, to be a reliable site. But not all .org sites are reliable. Let's look closer:

C: Is it **current**? Although the date at the bottom looks recent, an exploration of the site will show a reliance on articles that are outdated or lead to broken links. This is a problem, because a topic that changes as quickly as one like technology must rely on current and constantly updated materials. No—we cannot say this is current.

R: Is it **reliable?** The site does not provide a list of authors. Clicking "About" at the bottom of the page leads to a set of names that do not click through to the actual organizations—a bad sign. Further, it says it was "created by the National Consumer Advocacy Commission." But a Google search reveals that this organization doesn't exist! So we'll give "reliable" a big NO.

A: Is it **authoritative**? Again, this is a no. The materials used are not current, and many lead to broken links. The comments tend to use biased language and seem more focused on persuasion (or even manipulation) toward a certain view than on presenting facts.

P: What is its **purpose**? The purpose seems to be to convince readers that there are no dangers or hazards associated with cell phone use. We know that's untrue, and so again, this fails the test.

Result? CRAP-

Authors

In many cases, it's easy to find an author's name on an online site. Evaluate the author fully—don't just assume they know what they're doing. For example,

- Do they have the right academic credentials or professional experience to back up their authority? For instance, someone who's spent their life as a short-order cook wouldn't be considered an authority on astronomy, nor would a PhD-level astronomer be considered an expert on the art of donut making.
- Have they published work in the field?
- Does a quick review of the topic or field suggest that they're a known expert in that area?

Sometimes pages will list an author's bio*, résumé**, or curriculum vitae*** (CV) on the site, allowing you to find out more about their education, work, and publication history. You can always do a Web search to find out more about them.

*A "bio" (biographical sketch) is a short piece of information about the author and their life, often highlighting unique or interesting events—especially those relevant to the piece they've just written (see the glossary of terms).

**A résumé is a *short* listing of a person's education, qualifications, and relevant job skills. Résumés are typically used when applying for a job. They are 1-2 pages long (see the glossary of terms).

***A curriculum vitae (CV) is like a résumé on steroids. Where a résumé tends to be limited in scope, a CV is a comprehensive listing of one person's lifetime educational accomplishments and honors, professional memberships, employment, and accomplishments (including publications, lectureships, conference participations, and so forth). These may be dozens of pages in length! (see the glossary of terms)

Sometimes an online site will look good but won't show an author's name. Does that mean you shouldn't trust the site? Not necessarily.

Many sites employ a staff of writers or freelance writers to create content on the site but don't list the author's name. For example, the National Institute of Health's information page about headaches lists no authors. Scroll to the page bottom, and you'll see the page was "prepared by: Office of Communications and Public Liaison." However, the NIH is a highly respected national institution, and their site is full of information that absolutely meets our **CRAP** criteria. They list no authors, but they point to the information's origin, and we can be confident that they are relying on strong writers for their material. Is this a useful site? Absolutely.

Periodical* sites may post articles that don't credit an author. Many of these sites have their own department of journalists**, writers, and freelance writers*** who create their content; these writers are often not credited individually.

*A periodical is anything that is printed on a regular schedule (i.e., periodically). Periodicals include newspapers, magazines, journals, zines, and more (see the glossary of terms).

**A journalist is a skilled writer who has completed a college bachelor's degree in journalism. Journalistic writing follows a specific style that is fact-based and objective (see the glossary of terms).

***A freelance writer is a professional writer who is hired and assigned to write specific stories or articles. Freelancers may not be experts in subjects they're assigned to write about, but they are skilled researchers, enabling them to write about varied topics (see the glossary of terms).

Information/Page Date

You'll want to check to see if the material you're looking at has a date. As a general rule, the more current the date on the material, the better—especially if you're discussing something that undergoes near-constant change, like politics, science, or technology.

But sometimes, information can be dated and still be useful. For instance, if I was writing a paper about organic gardening, I might be interested in some of Dr. Rudolph Steiner's original lectures on biodynamic farming. These can be found on the Rudolph Steiner Archieve and eLibrary. They date back to the 1920s, but their content is still considered useful and informative by many farmers **(CRAP+)**. This example shows how important it is to consider date when evaluating a source.

Sometimes, you won't find any date on the material. Again, you'll need to evaluate this in terms of the strength of the rest of the page. Scrolling to the bottom of a web page will often reveal a "last update" date at the bottom, and this can help your decision process. If you can't locate any dates on the material and the website hasn't been updated in years, you should probably find a better source.

Other Points to Check

Consider the visual layout and appeal of the page:

- Does it look modern **(CRAP+)** or dated **(CRAP-)** (i.e., as if someone hasn't updated it in years)?
- Are there lots of advertisements or direct attempts to sell products? **(CRAP-)**
- Are there pop-ups that interfere with navigating or reading the page? **(CRAP-)**

And take a look at the page content:

- Are the articles or content well written and carefully proofread? Do they "sound" authoritative and feel reliable? **(CRAP+)**
- Do articles include links to other materials or links to credible and/or reliable source materials? **(CRAP+)** Has content been carefully edited, or can you detect lots of errors? **(CRAP-)**
- Is the language smart and objective? **(CRAP+)** Or does it include biased language, slang, or frankly rude or negative words? **(CRAP-)** For example, let's imagine you were researching a question of why people buy beverages in single-use plastic bottles. **An objective, fact-based statement**: Studies show that many people buy beverages in single-use plastic bottles because the bottles are convenient, easy to carry, and available just about anywhere. **A biased, non-factual statement**: Let's face it—most people who buy single-use plastic bottles are just too lazy to carry reusable bottles. Or they just don't care if they single-handedly destroy the environment.

Look in the Right Places

Start your search in the right place. When looking for a specific piece of evidence, don't just automatically type a word into Google: instead, ask yourself, "What's the best place I might find this?" While thinking about the subject, consider the persons or organizations that are considered experts on the topic, and try beginning a search with those names. For instance, if you wanted to answer a question about spaceflight, you might think of starting with NASA.

If you begin in the right place, you're more likely to find useful information right away, and it's more likely to be credible. Likewise, try and find the best human sources as well. With a little research on your topic, you can identify the big names in the field.

Don't always start by turning to the Internet and Google. Yes, this may be the easiest way to go, but is it always the best? No—not always. Visit your college library, or search it electronically. Read textbooks or periodicals. Seek out human experts. Put your hands on your topic, if you can, by diving into it in a personal way. Try making an observation, conducting a survey, or interviewing a subject. In a recent research writing class, a student writing about Starbucks' business practices actually drove to company headquarters in Seattle and interviewed a top executive. Another student—this one investigating Ebola virus—met with two local microbiologists, while a third student researching the geology of Crater Lake went on a weekend outing to experience the national park up close and personal.

Practice these strategies when you evaluate websites, and you should be able to find strong materials that will boost your college work.

Pro Tip

Whenever you identify a good printed source—book, journal, etc.—go to the end of it and read the bibliography. Voila: a brand new list of potential source materials!



Check Your Understanding: Evaluating a Website

Part 1: Consider what you've just learned about currency, reliability, accuracy, and purpose or point of view to help you evaluate the academic merit of a source.

Keep these qualities in mind as you explore one (or more) of these sites.

- Feline Reactions to Bearded Men
  (found at www.improbable.com)
- Aluminum Foil Deflector Beanie
  (found at zapatopi.net)
- Dihydrogen Monoxide Research Division
  (found at www.dhmo.org)

Part 2: Answer and consider the following.

1. What was your first impression when you first glanced at the site? Why did you have this impression?
2. Explore the site a little—clicking links, reading content, looking for authors and dates and so forth. Did your opinion change? Why? What did you discover? Would you rely on the site for your college work? Does it meet the **CRAP** test?

See the Appendix, Results for the "Check Your Understanding" Activities, for answers.

What About Finding Good Materials in “Hard Copy” Periodicals?

Follow the same guidelines given above for finding strong Web materials. Look at the author, date, and the material itself. Consider the publication itself: a mainstream, respected newspaper or magazine—like *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or *The Atlantic*—more or less automatically meets our **CRAP+** test, while smaller or local publications may require a detailed evaluation.

A Few Thoughts on *Wikipedia* and other Open Encyclopedias

As a rule, *Wikipedia* and other ”Wiki” sources are not considered to be acceptable sources for college work.

Why not?

The beauty of *Wikipedia* is its egalitarianism: It’s billed as a public encyclopedia for everyone. The problem with this is that anyone can create a *Wikipedia* entry, and likewise, anyone can edit the entries. Unfortunately, ”anyone” is usually not an authority in the field. Remember, we’re looking for sources that meet the **CRAP** criteria and that are written by people with degrees, education, and/or expertise in the field. *Wikipedia* doesn’t follow this model, and so we don’t rely on it as a reliable source.

But now that I’ve told you not to use *Wikipedia*, be aware that sometimes a teacher may ask you to use *Wikipedia* for a specific purpose. In that case, they’ll explain to you why they’re asking you to use it and explain how you should proceed.

Also, consider this: studies have shown that the information in *Wikipedia* is, in most cases, as accurate as that from standard encyclopedias (Taraborelli; Terdimann). Yet despite these findings, two problems remain:

> One, as discussed above, Wiki entries can be made and edited by anyone. **(CRAP-)**
>
> Two, there are multiple instances of *Wikipedia* entries being changed as a “joke” or to defame or damage a source’s credibility. **(CRAP-)**

These problems once again point out why we don’t rely on *Wikipedia* for academic work.

Wikipedia, however, has two great features that you can use right away:

1. Most entries have long lists of source materials at the bottom of each topic page. Many of these listed materials will be useful when you’re doing research or at least will aim you in a sound direction.
2. *Wikipedia* can be a great place to start learning more about a topic. Just remember that it is a springboard—not a reliable source itself.

In addition to not using *Wikipedia* as an academic source, you should also avoid *DotDash* (formerly *About.com*), *Yahoo! Answers*, *eHow*, and other similar public information sites. If you have questions about using these sources, discuss this with your teacher.

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4.3: Learning About Plagiarism and Guidelines for Using Information

Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It

Plagiarism happens when we use another person's intellectual materials and don't give them credit. As discussed earlier, intellectual property is defined as any kind of material (i.e., writing, art, music, film, etc.) or ideas envisioned and created by another person.

Plagiarism is a kind of academic dishonesty—a kind of theft. Colleges and universities take plagiarism seriously; many discipline or even expel students who are found to be plagiarizing.

Many educators used to believe that students plagiarized either because they were lazy or because they just didn't care about anything but getting that final piece of paper: the degree or certificate. Both of these reasons are still true sometimes: we've all met people who don't like to work hard (or at all!) or who, in the case of college, just want that piece of paper and don't care how they get it.

But today, thanks to work by innovative educators, instructors know that plagiarism and cheating are often motivated by more complicated factors.

As for you: how can you avoid plagiarism? It's actually quite simple:

1. **As much as possible, do your own work**. In other words, always start by writing what you know about a subject, turning to sources only when you need to support your own ideas with authoritative backing or when there's a knowledge gap you cannot fill on your own. Or, of course, to satisfy requirements imposed by your teacher, i.e., who asks you use a certain number of sources in completing an assignment. But even then, much of the work should be your own.
2. **Take notes carefully**. If you add source material to your work, mark it or identify it in such a way that you will *know* it's from a source. Cite the work immediately and add it to your works cited list.
3. And, **if you use someone else's intellectual property, you must give them credit**. If you bring their work into your assignment, you must mention them as the work's owners.

College students studying English or writing will use MLA—Modern Language Association—citation to set up their papers and handle sources. MLA is discussed elsewhere in this text (see the appendices Resources for Working with MLA and Creating a Works Cited Page) but understand for now that to properly cite intellectual property (also called source materials) in your writing, you must do the following:

- Mention the source's owner/creator in your written work at the point where the source is used.
- Create a list of all of the sources you used in your assignment; you'll do this by arranging them in a works cited list at the end of your essay.
- Make sure sources on the works cited page are actually cited in your essay. If you read some source materials to learn more about your topic but do not mention them in your paper, you do *not* need to list them in the works cited list. But if you later end up using those sources in your paper, then you'll need to add them to your works cited.

Guidelines for Using Information

In today's digital age, with information seemingly at our fingertips, it's important to understand some of the guidelines and restrictions that affect how we use that information. This is another important part of using sources correctly and avoiding plagiarism.



Copyright

Copyright is a legal term that refers to the person (or people) who own and distribute a piece of information. The copyright holder has rights to that material, and if others use the material without getting permission first, they may be in violation of copyright (see the glossary of terms). This isn't good (!) and can result in fines.

What's the most important thing you need to know about copyright? Simple: If something is copyrighted, you can't use it without getting permission; this may involve paying for permission.

- If you're a college student, your college librarians can help you navigate copyright issues. They may also be able to get you copyrighted material through Interlibrary Loan.
- As a college student or faculty member, you may be able to access copyrighted material through the practice of "fair use" (below).
- You might find copyrighted materials in your college library.
- You may be able to find similar materials in Open Educational Resources (OERs). (Like the one you're reading now!)

Otherwise, the US Copyright Office (www.copyright.gov) is your go-to location for everything you need to know about copyright.

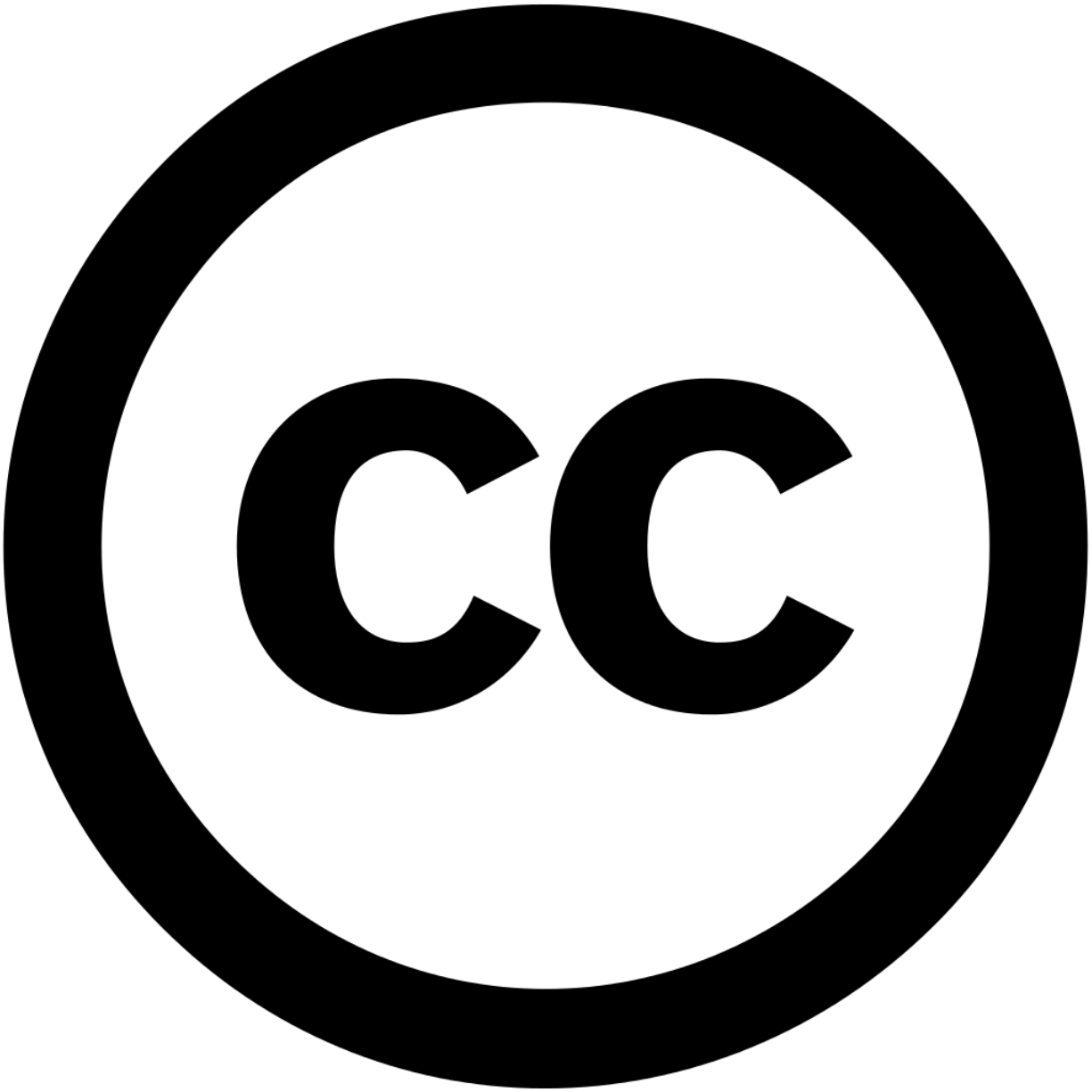


Fair Use for Academic Purposes

The concept of **fair use** allows students and teachers to use small amounts of copyrighted materials for a short-term, limited purpose—particularly for study, teaching, or research (see the glossary of terms; Stanford University Libraries also has an informative article on the subject of fair use).

In general, the following should be true if you claim fair use to work with copyrighted materials:

- You will use them for a limited purpose. For example, you'll use them to complete an assignment and then will return or release them. Specifically, you won't retain the material to use at a later date.
- You will not post them on the Web, make them available publicly, or share them with anyone else.
- You will not make permanent copies of the material.
- You will only use a small portion of the "whole" material. For example, using two or three chapters of a twenty-chapter book is a fine example of fair use; using twenty-four of twenty-five chapters without paying for them would *not* be considered fair use.
- You will not benefit, monetarily, in any way from the material.



Creative Commons

Creative Commons (creativecommons.org) is a not-for-profit organization that collects all sorts of materials and makes them available to the public for free use (see the glossary of terms).

When a user creates a piece of content (writing, art, photography, or just about anything), they may choose to put a Creative Commons license on the material. The license explains how people share, remix, repurpose, or in other ways use the material.

As a student, the Creative Commons has made a world of materials available to you. If you use any of the materials in your work, you should include the Creative Commons in your source citation.

Open Educational Resources

Open Educational Resources are teaching and learning materials that are available for free use by students and teachers everywhere (see the glossary of terms; you can also learn more at oercommons.org). The move toward OERs has really taken off recently—both to take advantage of the Internet and digital publishing and also to help control the skyrocketing cost of textbooks. Open resources are easy to access and use and are continually updated and revised. You're reading one right now!

Wiki Sources

A **wiki** is a website that functions as a public, open encyclopedia or collection of information (see the glossary of terms). The best known of these is Wikipedia. Wiki sources typically can be created and edited by anyone. The best part of wikis is their openness, along with the fact that people collaborate to create them. The worst part is that wikis can be created edited by anyone—including people who have no business doing so or, even worse, who intentionally enter false or defamatory information.

Because wikis are often created by people who don't meet the academic definition of "expert," instructors tend to discourage them as academic resources. That said, they can be good places to begin screening ideas and getting general information.

Torrent and BitTorrent Sites

A **BitTorrent** site is a website that encourages peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing. Files can consist of books, periodicals, music, film, data (many scientists use Torrent files to distribute large data packages) or virtually anything (see the glossary of terms).

A major problem with these sites is that many of them engage in illegal file-sharing— particularly of music and film and lately of graphic novels. Notwithstanding the ethics involved, most of the sites are not secure, which raises the risk of users being implicated in illegal file-sharing activities. Most BitTorrent sites do not provide user anonymity and most can track (or at least record) IP addresses.

The best advice with BitTorrents: stay away from them unless you're really good with technology and know exactly what you're getting into.

Why is this worth mentioning? You'll often be asked to watch film or access other resources as part of your classes. And, you'll be asked to buy textbooks. You may be tempted to download a free book or movie through a Torrent site. Beware, and consider the implications first.

Reverse Image Search

Sometimes we find useful images online and wish to use them in our work, only to find we have no idea where they came from. You can now do a reverse image search to try and find the owner or creator of images on the Web.

One of the best of these is **TinEye** (www.tineye.com). Upload a copy of the image in question, and the TinEye engine will search for the original or oldest-known occurrence of the image. Google also has a reverse image search, and others are appearing on the Web as this is written.



Check Your Understanding: Reverse Image Search

What if you have an image that you found somewhere on the Internet and you want to use it in an assignment or some sort of publication, but you don't remember where you found it. How will you credit the source? This is where knowing how to perform a reverse image search can come in handy.

1. Go to Google and search for "image."
2. Click "images" at the top of that page.
3. Pick an image and save it to your desktop or clipboard.
4. Go to www.tineye.com. Upload your image and use TinEye to search for its origins. See what you find!

See the Appendix, Results for the "Check Your Understanding" Activities, for answers.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Appendices

3.1: Appendix
3.2: Grammar and Style
3.3: Resources for Working with MLA
3.4: Creating a Works Cited Page
3.5: Results for the “Check Your Understanding” Activities
3.6: Glossary of Terms
3.7: Works Cited in This Text

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3.1: Appendix



***Figure* 3.1.1** - *"The Vetruvian Man" by doctor wonder is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0*

Appendix, *noun* (əˈpendɪks), *plural*, appendices (əˈpendɪsiːz)

1. *Anatomy* A tube-shaped sac attached to an opening into the lower end of the large intestine in humans and some other mammals.
2. A section or table of subsidiary matter at the end of a book or document.

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3.2: Grammar and Style

This text isn't meant to be a grammar and style handbook, but we know that many writers have one or two (or three!) editing problems they would like to work on. In this appendix, you'll find some helpful tips for several common editing issues as well as references and links to other resources.

Top Ten Errors List

Teachers and editors don't completely agree on the most common errors or even the most serious errors. Robert Connors and Andrea Lunsford completed a study in 1988, titled "Frequency of Errors in Current College Writing, or Ma and Pa Kettle Do Research," that compared the types of errors students made most often and what teachers marked most often, going back to studies from the early 1900s and forward. What they found was that, while errors may have been called something different in 1917 than in 1988, the kinds of mistakes that students make are still largely the same. Here's our own top ten errors list. To get on this list, a type of error must either make it difficult for a reader to understand the writing OR it must be the kind of error that irritates readers (what teachers call a "stigmatized" error).

- **Comma splice**: Two independent clauses (complete sentences) joined with a comma.
- **Fragment**: A dependent clause or a phrase punctuated as if it were an independent clause; an incomplete sentence.
- **Run-on sentence**: Two independent clauses joined with no intervening punctuation (i.e., run together).
- **Verb form or verb tense error**: A verb that is in the incorrect form or in the wrong tense.
- **Missing comma**: No comma after an introductory element; no comma in a compound sentence; no comma after a non-restrictive element/non-essential element; no comma before the last item in a list (the Oxford comma).
- **Wrong preposition**: The preposition chosen is incorrect.
- **Misplaced modifier**: A modifier, such as an adjective, adverb, or modifying phrase, that is placed too far from the word it modifies, seeming to modify another word.
- **Unclear pronoun**: Using a pronoun, such as he, she, they, etc., when it's not clear what noun the pronoun is replacing.
- **Apostrophe error**: Using an apostrophe when one isn't needed or leaving out the apostrophe when it is needed.
- **Misspelled homonym or homophone**: Using a word that sounds like the intended word, but spelled differently and with a different meaning.

Using a Checklist

You can use the suggested resources in this appendix to look up the kinds of errors that you make from this list—or just search online for that error. There are, of course, other kinds of errors: wrong word choice, spelling errors, capitalization errors, etc. What we suggest is that writers make their OWN list of errors that they make frequently and use that as a checklist for correcting their own mistakes, systematically (see the section "Revising," especially "Editing," "Proofreading," and Using Technology to Edit"). Below is an example of an editing checklist for academic essays that you can personalize.

Editing Checklist for Academic Essays

Format

- All papers are in MLA format
  - Appropriate headings and page numbering are used
  - Margins are correct: 1/2 inch from top to right header, 1 inch all around
  - Spacing is set to double, with no extra line spaces between headings and title, title and body, or between paragraphs
- Within the essay, parenthetical citations are used (Lastname 13).
- A works cited page is included when appropriate, with all necessary information.

Mechanics: Spelling, Punctuation, Grammar, Syntax

- Did I run spell-check?
- Did I check homonyms? (Example: to, too, and two)
- Did I look up difficult words?
- Did I proofread aloud to catch obvious errors?
- Are all sentences complete (subject & verb, complete thought)?
- Did I use one verb tense throughout (unless there was a good reason to switch)?

- Did I use present tense verbs to discuss texts?
- Have I checked for run-on sentences and comma splices? (Run-on: two independent clauses put together without any punctuation; Comma splice: two independent clauses put together with only a comma in between.)
- Does my paper flow when read aloud? Did I use different sentence lengths and styles?

Making and Using a Log of Your Mistakes

According to Cogie, Strain, and Lorinskas, authors of "Avoiding the Proofreading Trap: The Value of the Error Correction Process," one way to ensure that you find your own errors and correct them is to keep an editing log. To make an editing log, create four columns. Label each column: Error Example, Name of Error, Explanation, Correction Example. When you are editing your work and find a mistake, jot down the word, sentence, or phrase that is problematic in the first column. Then use your editing resources to figure out what that kind of error is called, and write that label in the second column. In the third column, write out what you need to find a solution, whether that's a definition, an explanation, a page number in a book or an online link. Finally, in the last column, write out the corrected word, phrase, or sentence.

Here's an example:

Error Example	Name of Error	Explanation	Correction
Honesty is it's own reward.	Apostrophe error	"It's" means "it is"; use "its" for the possessive.	Honesty is its own reward.

Once you've logged the same error multiple times, you may find that you've learned how to fix it. Even if that's not the case, you now have your very own resource for making corrections.

Tips for Writing Complete Sentences

Several of the most common errors have one thing in common: they are mistakes about sentence or phrase boundaries and what punctuation to use. To understand how to write complete sentences or fix errors related to making complete sentences (fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences), we need just a little shared grammar vocabulary.

Independent Clause: An independent clause is a unit of meaning with a subject and a verb that can be punctuated as a complete sentence. Native speakers of English will usually recognize an independent clause by itself as a complete sentence. Independent clauses can be joined together; they can also be joined with dependent clauses and also with phrases. Independent clauses begin with a capital letter and end with a period, question mark, or exclamation point.

How do we know if something is an independent clause?

Can we

- Make a yes/no question out of it?
- Make a tag question that can attach to the end of it?
- Precede with the expression "I believe that"?
- Recognize that it still makes sense in English?

Dependent Clause: An independent clause is a unit of meaning with a subject and a verb but that cannot be punctuated as a complete sentence. A dependent clause can be joined with an independent clause, using the right punctuation, to make a complete sentence.

How do we know if a clause is dependent? It can't pass any of the tests in the preceding definition for an independent clause.

Phrase: A group of words that that form a unit of meaning but do not contain both a subject and a verb and do not make a complete sentence. Phrases can be strung together; phrases can be joined to clauses.

How do we know if a group of words is just a phrase and not a clause? We can check to see if the phrase contains both a subject and a verb. If so, it's a clause and not a phrase. See explanations below for subjects and verbs.

Subject: A subject is a word or group of words that works with the verb in a sentence to make up a basic unit of meaning. Many subjects are nouns or pronouns, but other kinds of words and even phrases and some clauses can be subjects. The subject of a sentence is not the topic of the sentence.

First, how do we know if a word is a noun? Try these tests:

- Can we put it in a frame sentence, such as “The (insert word) seems important.”?
- Can we make it plural by adding –s or –es?
- Can we make it possessive by adding -‘s?
- Can we place “a” or “an” in front of it?
- Can we place “the” in front of it?
- Sometimes, but not always: Can we add a suffix such as –ship, -ence, -tion, or –ism to the end of the word?

How do we know if a noun (or another word or phrase) is the subject of a sentence?

- In statements, what noun (or word/phrase acting as a noun) comes before the verb?
- In questions, what noun comes after the verb or part of the verb?

Verb: A word that signifies action, existence, or occurrence; a word that can be changed in form to indicate the time of the sentence.

How do we know if a word is a verb?

- Can we change the form to indicate tense (change ending to –ed, -en, -ing, -es, -s)?
- Can we place a pronoun, such as “he” or “they,” in front of it, and it makes sense?
- Can it be preceded in its basic form by “must,” “can,” or “will”?
- Can it be negated: “I did not (verb)”?
- Can it be made into a command? (Example: “Speak!”)
- Can it fit into a frame sentence? “We should (verb) it.” –or- “We should (verb).”
- (Sometimes) Can we add prefixes and suffixes such as dis-, -ate, -ize?

How do we know if the verb (or word/phrase acting as the verb) is the main verb of the sentence?

- Does the verb (and possibly its related words) come after the word(s) that you believe are the subject?
- Does the verb pair up with a noun (or words acting like a noun) to make the main part of the sentence?

Punctuation

To improve your punctuation, practice with clauses and phrases.

First, try combining clauses with the correct punctuation. Here are the most common ways to join clauses. The examples below are demonstrated with these two clauses: “The two cats were constant companions. They truly loved each other.”

- **Comma + FANBOYS** (coordinating conjunction: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so): “The two cats were constant companions, for they truly loved each other.”
- **Semicolon**: “The two cats were constant companions; they truly loved each other.”
- **Semicolon with adverbial conjunction** (semicolon words such as however, nonetheless, moreover). Semicolon words do not make a sentence dependent on another sentence (do not turn a complete clause into a dependent clause): “The two cats were constant companions; moreover, they truly loved each other.”
- **Colon** (rare): “The two cats were constant companions: they truly loved each other.”
- **Make one sentence dependent on the other** by adding a subordinating conjunction (dependent word such as while, though, when, if). Dependent words turn a sentence into a dependent sentence (a dependent clause): “Though the two cats were constant companions, they truly loved each other.” -or- “The two cats were constant companions because they truly loved each other.”

Notice that the way you choose to join the clauses can emphasize a certain meaning, so make your choices carefully.

Next, practice correctly punctuating with commas.

Listing comma: This comma is used to separate the items in a list of two or more. (The comma that comes before the final item is called the Oxford comma, and it is always used in academic writing. It can often be left out in informal writing as long as the meaning is clear; it is usually left out in newspaper articles to save space.) Here’s an example: “I bought bread, peanut butter, and jelly to make sandwiches.”

Compound sentence comma (two independent clauses joined together): See the example in the previous section, Comma + FANBOYS. NOTE: Don’t add a comma every time you use “and” or another coordinating conjunction. Make sure first that the two things you are joining are actually two independent clauses. You can do that by looking at the words before “and” to make sure they make up a complete sentence, and then do the same with the words after “and.”

Introductory comma: This comma is used after an introductory word, phrase, or clause. If the introductory element is very short, the comma is optional. Example: “After the storm, the spider carefully rebuilt its web.”

Interrupting comma: This pair of commas is used to mark interruptions within a sentence—as long as the interruption is not essential to the meaning of the sentence. Example: “I wonder, you know, if you really love me.”

Restrictive element: an essential element, whether a clause or phrase. Removing the essential element would change the meaning of the sentence. Restrictive elements/essential elements do NOT need commas. Here’s an example: “The monster that swallowed Los Angeles died of indigestion.” The phrase “that swallowed Los Angeles” can’t be removed from the sentence because essential in identifying which monster.

Non-restrictive element: a non-essential element, either a clause or phrase. Removing the non-essential element does not change the meaning of the sentence. These elements need commas. One way to remember that is to think of comma handles so that you can lift the element in and out of the sentence. Here’s an example: “My third sister, who lives in Salem, is the baby of the family.” The phrase “who lives in Salem” could be removed from the sentence because it’s not essential in identifying which sister—we already know she’s the third sister.

There are other ways to use commas; these are just the most common uses.

Best Editing and Grammar Resources (a Links List)

Here are some of our favorite online resources. You can search for a specific topic or just browse to find great resources about writing and editing.

Grammar Girl: http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl

Purdue OWL: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/

Grammarly: www.grammarly.com

Grammar Monster: http://grammar-monster.com

The New Yorker’s Comma Queen (videos): http://video.newyorker.com/series/comma-queen

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3.3: Resources for Working with MLA

The acronym MLA stands for Modern Language Association. The MLA is a professional, international organization based in New York City, New York, U.S.A. Its stated purpose is to strengthen the study and teaching of language and literature. It also provides a way for people working in the humanities to format their documents and handle source materials (we call this "MLA style"), and it is the principal professional organization for the humanities field.

What are the humanities? They are the field of study concerned with human culture, including literature, history, art, music, religion, foreign languages, and philosophy. In contrast, the empiric disciplines are those concerned with subjects involving verification through data collections, measurement, observation and other techniques for verification. The empiric fields of study include the sciences, math, teaching, history, psychology, and others.

As mentioned above, MLA style helps us format our documents and handle source materials. The use of a consistent document format by *everyone* using MLA makes it possible for us to pick up an MLA-formatted paper and follow it easily, without having to figure out how it's arranged. Likewise, the use of a consistent approach to handling sources helps a writer avoid plagiarism and also helps a reader follow the writer's use of sources.

Modern Language Association style periodically undergoes revision to keep up with changes in writing and publishing. The most recent eighth edition of MLA came out in 2016. Here's what the MLA organization had to say about "MLA 8":

"The eighth edition of the *MLA Handbook*, published in 2016, rethinks documentation for an era of digital publication. The MLA now recommends a universal set of guidelines that writers can apply to any source and gives writers in all fields—from the sciences to the humanities—the tools to intuitively document sources" ("What's New").

As a college student studying writing, you'll use MLA style to accomplish the following:

1. To format your documents using a consistent style.

MLA style is the "outfit" of our written documents in the humanities. Much like a football player wears a helmet and pads or a soccer player wears shin guards, our documents "wear" a certain style of formatting. We'll discuss that more below.

2. To identify and manage source materials when you use them in your own writing.

This insures you use sources correctly in your own work and give credit to the person who owns and/or created the source material, both of which help you avoid plagiarism. It also allows others—who read and are interested in your work—to easily review and consult the sources you've used.

Using MLA to Format Your Documents

The following are the basic guidelines for setting up an MLA-formatted document. Your word processor will have menu controls to help you with these settings.

- Set side margins to 1" on left, right, top, and bottom.
- Set margins to 0.5" for header and footer.
- Use a standard* 12-point font throughout the document.
- Double-space throughout the document.
- Use a straight left edge and a "ragged" right edge.
- Indent paragraphs ½" (1 tab).
- Center a document title on page 1. Use plain 12-point font—do not bold, underline, or italicize.
- Create an upper left heading on page 1 only. This should include the following:
  - Your name (first and last name)
  - The teacher's name
  - The name of the class
  - The date, in MLA style**
- Create an upper right *header* for all pages. This should include the following:
  - Your last name
  - An automatic page number

*Examples of standard fonts include Times, Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica, and others. Avoid non-standard Microsoft fonts like Calibri and Cambria, typewriter fonts (Courier), and overly-casual fonts (Comic Sans and Papyrus).

**MLA date format is very specific: it includes, in this order, the day of month, month, and year.

For example, the day February 11 in the year 2016 would look like this: **11 February 2016**.

Longer months can also be abbreviated, so it could also look like this: **11 Feb. 2016**.

Note that there are no commas in an MLA-style date.

Use this format for your document heading and on your Works Cited list. When mentioning dates in your paper, use traditional format, i.e., "On February 11, 2016, I found the world's best coffee shop."

Why does MLA use this date format? When people in the U.S. write a date like this—2/11/16—we read it as February 11, 2016.

But guess what: most of the rest of the world would read that as November 2, 2016! (Yes, really! To avoid confusion, and because MLA is a format used internationally, MLA uses this unique date format.)

Have a look at this example of what the beginning of of an MLA-formatted paper looks like, from mla.org. For additional examples, try visiting https://style.mla.org/sample-papers/

A Four-Step Process for Working with Sources

1. **Create a Works Cited Page**. When you bring a source into to your writing, create a Works Cited page and *immediately* add your source to the page, creating a complete, correct listing.
2. **Use Sources Correctly**. Bring written sources into your paper using quotation, paraphrase, or summary.
3. **Cite/Identify In-Text Sources**. When you add a source to your paper, *immediately* cite or identify it where it occurs.
4. **Proofread Your Work with Sources.**

- Check and double-check to make sure every sentence containing a source has been properly cited or identified.
- Make sure Works Cited listings and in-text citations "match." If you mention a source in your paper, it must also appear on the Works Cited list. If you mention a source on your Works Cited list, it must also appear in the paper.

Here are some excellent online resources to help you work with MLA:

The Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL): this site is used by educators and colleges all over the US and in other countries as well. It will help you not just with MLA but with all aspects of writing, research, grammar, usage, etc. It has an excellent search tool. It's also updated almost continuously.

The MLA Style Center: this is a subdivision of the larger MLA website. It has great materials to help students practice with MLA. It has a downloadable copy of the MLA template, FAQ pages, and more.

MLA Practice Template: from the MLA Style Center. Use this to practice formatting your citations.

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3.4: Creating a Works Cited Page

The purpose of the Works Cited page is to collect all of the sources used in a text and to arrange them so they are easy for your reader to locate. Listing the sources also helps you track them and makes it less likely that you might accidentally plagiarize by forgetting to mention a piece of source material.

Setting up the Page

Follow these guidelines to set up your Works Cited:

- Works Cited is located at the end of a paper. Always start it at the top of a new page.
- Title it Works Cited, even if there is only a single source listed.
- Center the title at the topmost point on the page.
- The Works Cited page uses the same formatting as the rest of the paper: 12 point standard font, double spacing, 1" margins on all sides, etc.
- List sources alphabetically, according to whatever comes first in each citation. (Do not list them in the order they occur within the paper.)
- Use "hanging" paragraphs to set up sources. This means that the first line of each source begins at the left margin, while second and subsequent lines are indented by ½" (1 tab). This is the reverse of a regular paragraph. The "hanging" format makes it easily to visually scroll down the list and see each source. If you are using Microsoft Word, you can set hanging paragraphs by choosing the "hanging" setting in the "Paragraphs" menu.

Here's an annotated example of a Works Cited page (click here to open in a new page, or visit our resource site at theword4instructors.wordpress.com and search for "Annotated Works Cited Examples"):

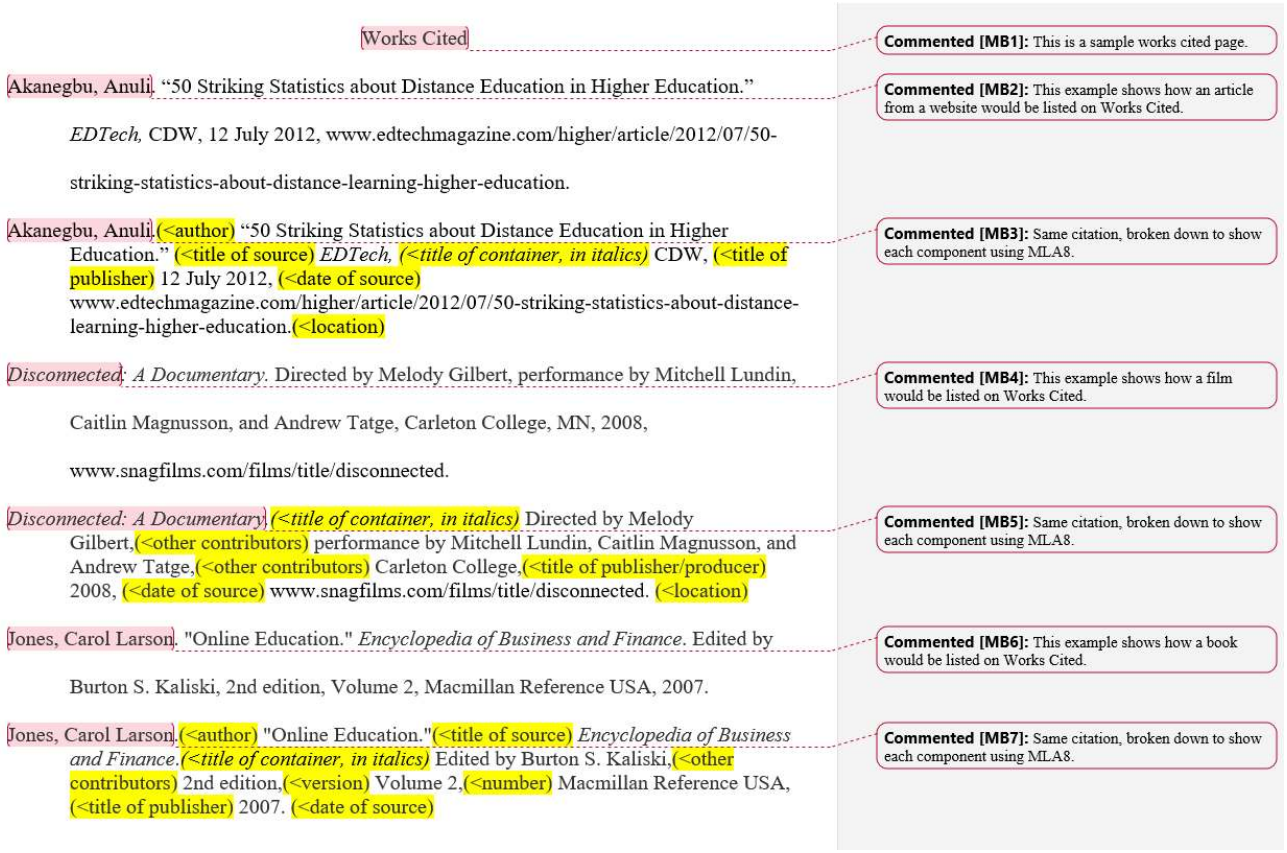


***Figure* 3.4.1**

Creating Entries on the Works Cited Page

The newest version of MLA—version 8—came out during the winter of 2016 and promises to be the citation style of the electronic age. Rather than the previous method, which involved creating a separate style for each different kinds of source (and was very time-intensive), it created a single template (see the link provided below) to be used for all types of source materials.

Let's look at how to set up Works Cited citations. We'll work through one, and then I'll add some details.

We'll work with this article from *The Atlantic* (found at theatlantic.com): "The Importance of High School Mentors."

Open the MLA template, too: https://style.mla.org/files/2016/04/practice-template.pdf

To use the template, start at the top and fill in information about the source. If there are lines in the template you can't fill in, we simply leave them blank. Note that on the template, each item is followed with specific punctuation. Copy these as you create your own citations.

Author.

Enter the author's name on line 1 of the template.

- The first author's name is always reversed: Last Name, First Name.
- It is in plain font and (as you'll note in the template) is followed with a period.

Here's what you should have on line 1:

Sebenius, Alyza.

Title of Source.

This is the name of the material you're working with.

- Capitalize all words in the title of source except for articles, conjunctions, and prepositions.
- If it is an article, essay, chapter, or any other "small" piece of material, it will be in quotation marks and plain font.
- If it is a book, film, periodical, or an entire web page, it will be in italic font with no quotation marks.
- The title of source is followed with a period—and when quotation marks are used, note that the period always goes inside the quotation marks (see below).

Here's what should be on line 2:

"The Importance of High School Mentors."

Title of Container,

The container is the "place" that holds or houses the source you're using. For example:

A book chapter (the "title of source") is held within a book (the "container").

A newspaper article (the "title of source") is held within a newspaper (the "container").

An essay on a web page (the "title of source") is held within a website (the "container").

A magazine article (the "title of source") is held within a magazine (the "container").

(And so forth)

- The container is almost always* in italic font and followed by a comma.
- Capitalize it fully.

*An example of a non-italicized container would be if you were citing an actual painting and the "container" was an art museum. The museum would be listed as the container but in plain font.

You have two options for the container in this case; either would be correct:

The Atlantic,

theatlantic.com,

Other Contributors,

This line provides a way to mention people who assisted with creating or handling the source, e.g., directors, translators, performers, illustrators, etc.

- List them using plain, unabbreviated language, e.g., performed by, directed by, etc.
- Other contributors are listed in plain font and followed with a comma.

Our article has no “other contributors,” and so we would leave this blank, skipping it. When you hit sections of the template where you have no information, just skip them and move on.

Version,

Use this if you want to mention an edition number (e.g., Second Edition, Evening Edition, etc.) or if you want to list a volume (Volume 3), a month (January), etc.

- Version is written in plain font and followed by a comma.

Our article has no version, so we’ll leave line 5 blank.

Number,

Use this to provide an issue number (e.g., for a magazine or journal), a special archive number (e.g., with museum pieces), or something similar.

- Number is in plain font and followed by a comma.

Our article has no number, so we’ll leave line 6 blank.

Publisher,

The publisher is the person or institution that makes the source available to the world.

- Publishers for books, periodicals, and printed materials are usually written on one of the first pages.
- Web page publishers can usually be found at the page bottom. If you cannot find the publisher quickly, you might use Google to search for it, i.e., searching ‘New York Times Publisher.’
- Film and music publishers will usually be located on the material.
- Write out the complete publisher name; capitalize it fully and don’t abbreviate or omit words.
- The publisher is in plain font and followed by a comma.

If we scroll to the page bottom, we find our publisher for line 7:

The Atlantic Monthly Group,

Publication date,

This is the date of the “title of source” (see line 2).

- Use MLA date format: day month year
- Follow the date with a comma.
- With longer months, you may abbreviate the source; if you do, follow the abbreviation with a period.

We could use either of these options for our source:

13 January 2016,

13 Jan. 2016,

Location.

The source’s location tells the reader where to find the source. Many sources will not have a location, but it should be listed if present.

- If using a book, the page number is the location.
  - For single pages, use this format: p. 6.
  - For two or more pages, list like this: pp. 62-4 or pp. 184-96.
  - If using two or more pages and they cross a “hundred” marker, list like this: pp. 456-502.

- With web pages, give the URL—but omit the http:// at the beginning.
- If a doi (digital object indicator) number is available, use that instead of a URL.
- Do not break URLs or doi's manually to try and fit them into your Works Cited: just type them in and let your Word processor decide where to break them.
- If you have a different kind of source and believe you have a location with it, share it as best you can, following these guidelines.
- Locations are in plain font and followed by a period.

Here's what you would have for line 9:

www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/01/mentorship-in-public-schools/423945.

Now, to create a Works Cited citation, **link all of the available elements together, following the correct punctuation and placing a space between each component.**

- Use your word processor's menus to set hanging paragraphs
- Don't break your lines manually: set hanging paragraphs and then keep typing, allowing the software to determine the line breaks.
- Your citation should always end with a period.

Here's what the final citation would include:

Sebenius, Alyza. "The Importance of High School Mentors." *The Atlantic*, The Atlantic Monthly Group, 13 Jan. 2016, www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/01/mentorship-in-public-schools/423945/.

And here's what it will look like on the Works Cited page with double spacing and hanging paragraphs:



***Figure* 3.4.2**

Check Your Understanding: Creating Citations

Create a Works Cited citation for this story from the *Los Angeles Times* (found at latimes.com): "Inside the Deal that Brought Sony's 'Spider-Man' Back to Marvel's Cinematic Universe."

See the Appendix, Results for the "Check Your Understanding" Activities, for answers.

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3.5: Results for the “Check Your Understanding” Activities

Check Your Understanding: Texts

Answer: All of these are texts! Each one meets the criteria of containing information that we can explore and from which we can derive ideas and information.

Consider your favorite film: it has surface messages and a basic story, but it also has deeper meanings that work sort of like buried treasure.

Or take the story of “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” for example. On the surface, it’s about a little girl, a bear family, and what happens when she wanders into their forest home. But what about the deeper meanings. Is “Goldilocks” a commentary on the importance of privacy rights? A story of juvenile delinquency in its earliest stages? A text can have different meanings for different people.

Check Your Understanding: Practicing Your Pre-reading Skills

There are no right or wrong answers here—the goal of this was simply to help you practice pre-reading. Keep it up!

Check Your Understanding: Annotation

Again, there is no right or wrong answer—simply a chance for you to practice annotation.

Here’s a sample of what a short summary of this article might look like. Notice I mention the author and article in the first sentence:

In “Are We Loving Our National Parks to Death,” Dayton Duncan raises questions about the effects of millions of visitors on our national park lands. He talks about our parks’ origins and contrasts the parks’ early years with their condition now. He points at problems that include lack of camping space, roads in disrepair, and a general overcrowding, and he discusses ideas for limiting impacts—which may mean limiting visitors. He also brings up interesting points about the way climate change is affecting many of our national parks and forests. Ultimately, he asks the public for help in championing the parks with money and support.

Check Your Understanding: Reflecting on What You’ve Read

How did this activity work for you? The way that e-communication is changing the ways we interact is certainly fascinating. Wouldn’t you agree?

Keep an eye on the emails, texts, and instant messages you receive in the next couple of days, watching how these people use periods and other punctuation. Do your observations echo the points made in the article?

Check Your Understanding: Jargon

Hopefully, you’ll agree that using jargon requires some care and caution. You have to know your audience and understand their knowledge base in order to assess whether using jargon, technical language, and so forth will be a good idea.

Check Your Understanding: Sentence Length

Playing with sentences is fun, isn’t it? Keep working with this: you’ll find that simply by playing with sentence length and word choice, you can completely change the tone and feel of your writing.

Check Your Understanding: Summarizing a Text

How did you do with your summary? By now, you’ve probably practiced summary at least a couple of times while reading through this text.

Here are some of the key points your summary should have included:

- Annual physical exams are expensive and may be unnecessary.
- Preventative medicine is better than waiting until one gets sick and needs treatment.
- Biomarkers are metabolic indicators of one’s health.
- Scientists are building devices that can continuously track biomarkers.
- There are many hurdles to overcome before these devices can be trusted for wide use.

Check Your Understanding: Reflect on Your Own Reading Practices

What did you discover about your own reading practices? These kinds of personal reflection can be tremendously helpful in terms of your own study skills. The better you become with reading at all levels and for all purposes, the easier your studies will become. You'll save time, read more efficiently, and probably enjoy it more, too. Keep up the good work!

Check Your Understanding: Plagiarism

All of the examples are a kind of plagiarism. Did you get them all correct? Remember: any time you use someone else's intellectual property—of *any* kind—you must give them credit by acknowledging their name and providing information about the source.

Check Your Understanding: Evaluating a Website

Hopefully you found that *none* of those sites passed the CRAP test. But I'm betting you had fun reading through at least one of them.

As you evaluate websites in the future, remember these examples and be sure to explore the sites carefully as you decide whether or not they're reliable.

Check Your Understanding: Reverse Image Search

Were you able to find the actual creator of the image? Or at least to track it back a little bit? Reverse image search can be a powerful student tool. Remember, an image created by someone else is there intellectual property. Your obligation is to locate and give credit to the person who owns the image. Keep practicing with this: no doubt image searches will become easier and more effective as technology improves.

Check Your Understanding: Creating a Paraphrase

It was probably obvious to you pretty quickly that the second example is a stronger paraphrase. There is a clearer sense for my writing voice in it, with sentence structures that come more naturally to me and language that is my own.

The first example, by comparison, is a rather awkward attempt to preserve the original quote's exact structures without directly copying the author's words or phrases, and I'm not even sure it makes sense in a couple of spots (I had to reach for some similar-but-not-identical language). This is definitely an approach to avoid.

Check Your Understanding: Work with Quotation

Options 1 and 4 are both correct ways of presenting the information–they deliver the quote accurately, introduce it, and give appropriate credit to the author.

Check Your Understanding: Formatting Titles

Here are the correctly capitalized titles:

"People are Happier When They Spend Time in the Outdoors"

"Once upon a Time: A Tale of Lost Love"

Overcoming Adversity in Life

"Two People Apprehended in Attempt to Rob a Bank"

How did you do?

Check Your Understanding: Preliminary Research

How many of the sources on the first page of results are from Wikipedia? Three.

Where is the gravity hill in South Dakota located? Rapid City.

What later bands and musicians made explicit references to T. Rex? The Who, David Bowie, BA Robertson, The Ramones, R.E.M.

What is the first source listed in the "References" section at the end of the Wikipedia article? Steve Huey.

Check Your Understanding: Creating Citations

Your citation should look like this:

Faughnder, Ryan. “Inside the Deal that Brought Sony’s ‘Spider-Man’ Back to Marvel’s Cinematic Universe.” *Los Angeles Times*, tronc, 26 June, 2017, www.latimes.com/business/hollywood/la-fi-ct-sony-marvel-spider-man-20170626-story.html.

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3.6: Glossary of Terms

Annotate: To add notes or symbolic marks to a text, diagram, or other content.

Copyright: A right granted by statute to the author or originator of certain literary or artistic productions, whereby he is invested, for a limited period, with the sole and exclusive privilege of multiplying copies of the same and publishing and selling them ("What Is Copyright?").

Curriculum vitae **(CV)**: A lifelong account of a person's education, awards and honors, conferences and presentations, publications, professional memberships, employment, and so forth. A CV may be dozens of pages long; it doesn't attempt to be brief—as would a résumé; rather, it is an encyclopedic collect of a person's accomplishments.

Empiric disciplines: the fields of study concerned with subjects that can be measured or subjected to quantification or testing. For example: history, science, math, and psychology..

Figurative language: writing or speaking that uses metaphor, simile, irony, sarcasm, personification, or other techniques to create a specific response.

Freelance writer: a professional writer who is hired and assigned to write specific stories or articles. Freelancers may not be experts in subjects they're assigned to write about, but they are skilled researchers, enabling them to write about varied topics.

Humanities: the fields of study concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy.

Inform (e.g., The story was informed by his experience in Nepal): an essential idea or principle that supports the development of another idea, e.g., understanding U.S. history informs our understanding of current events.

Information literacy: refers to skill and competence in locating, examining, understanding, and working with all kinds of information.

Intellectual property: material or ideas envisioned and/or created by another person.

Jargon: special words, abbreviations, or expressions that are used by a particular profession or group and are often difficult for others to understand.

Journalist: a skilled writer who has completed a college bachelor's degree in journalism. Journalistic writing follows a specific style that is fact-based and objective. Journalists subscribe to codes of ethics and behavior in terms of creating factual, verified, and unbiased writing.

Navigate: to find one's way, whether over open seas or through a challenging piece of writing.

Open Educational Resources (OERs): documents, media, and other materials that are useful for teaching and learning and which are free and available to all.

Periodical: a publication that is printed on a regular schedule (i.e., periodically). Periodicals include newspapers, magazines, journals, and more. Periodical titles should always be italicized in your academic writing.

Résumé: a brief (1-2 page) account of a person's education, work experience, and qualifications, typically sent with a job application. A longer version of the résumé is the *curriculum vitae*, often called the CV.

Rhetoric: the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially in the use of figurative language or special techniques in argument and composition.

Zine: short for magazine, a zine is a self-published collection of writing, drawing, poetry, art, or just about any type of creative material that can be part of a printed page. Zines are informal publications and are usually published or created in small lots. They're often low-tech, not looking anything like what we imagine as an actual magazine. Their purpose is to allow one or more contributors to express their creative ideas about a specific theme or idea. To learn more, go to Google and search for "zine."

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3.7: Works Cited in This Text

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SECTION OVERVIEW

Unit 2: Writing

Ah, writing…. So deceptively simple and yet for many people, so fraught with mystery. The coming section will attempt to demystify the writing process, making it not just easier but giving you tried-and-true tricks to smooth out your written work. It might even be fun!

It's time to shift from our earlier focus on reading and working with texts to now talk about what you need to do when you've been given a writing assignment. There's much to manage, from contemplating what your readers want and expect to figuring out how to get the words down on paper. Now, you're in the writer's seat. Buckle up!

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Why Write?

6.1: Self-Exploration and Self-Enrichment
6.2: Creativity
6.3: Comprehension and Academic Performance
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6.5: Effective Communication and Persuasion

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6.1: Self-Exploration and Self-Enrichment



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The answer to the question, “Why write?” may seem obvious to some. For others, maybe the first thought that comes to mind upon hearing that they have to register for a college writing class is, “I know how to write, so why should I have to take a class about it?” And that’s a fair question. You’ve probably been reading and writing most of your life. Why take yet another writing class just because you’re in college now? And beyond daily emails and short communications, how much are you really going to need to write in your daily life?

These are all valid questions. It may surprise you to find out that the reasons I’m going to offer you aren’t just about academic and professional success although those are some important reasons too.

. . . . . .

Often, when people think about writing, they think about the need to communicate a message to another. Common communication models present a sender (e.g. a writer) and a receiver (e.g. a reader) and different concepts of what happens as information is shared between them. But sometimes the purpose for writing isn’t at all about sending information to some “other” receiver or reader. Sometimes, your purpose for writing might simply be to explore an idea or even just to figure out what you think. The famous author Flannery O’Connor summed up this need by saying, “I write because I don’t know what I think until I read what I say.” If you take some time to think about it, this probably doesn’t come as a big surprise. Many people write all kinds of things solely for themselves: lists, goals, notes, journals, and more.

Even without a purpose outside of yourself—and maybe especially because writing can happen completely free from such expectations—the act of writing has the power to help you make connections between yourself and the world. Writing can help you establish your own experiences or ideas in relation to the experiences or ideas of others. In short, it can help you figure out what you think about things and help you to situate those thoughts in relation the world and among the multitude of opinions and ideas that exist within it. That’s a powerful tool!

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6.2: Creativity



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You might already be sensing that the process of self-exploration described above is a creative one, as it most definitely is. Writing your observations and thoughts and how they relate to other observations and thoughts can ignite your imagination and expand the possibilities of what you can accomplish—personally, academically, professionally, and creatively.

In so many ways, as modern humans, we are consumers, probably more so than we ever have been in the whole of human history. And in the information age, we consume media and information more than ever before. Every day, we consume texts, email messages, television and radio programming, YouTube videos, movies, music, social media, print media, advertisements, and more, and the current rate of media consumption doesn’t appear to be slowing anytime soon.

But you need to possess some writing skills in order to move beyond the consumer status to become someone who produces ideas and media of your own. Writing is one way that you can make sure that your voice is heard among all the other voices in that media stream. Writing not only helps you make sense of the information that you consume, it also helps you develop and shape those ideas in a way that makes them useful, entertaining, or thought provoking for others.

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6.3: Comprehension and Academic Performance

The previous paragraphs have already discussed the potential for writing to help you think, so it also should come as no surprise that it's a wonderful tool to help you learn. At some point in your experience as a student so far, you may have noticed that you understand a concept better once you've used it or worked with it somehow. By the middle of the 20th century, the idea that experience is a critical part of learning was gaining quite a bit of attention among experts who study theories of learning. It seems obvious, but sometimes it takes educators a while to catch on. They were beginning to realize what students of life have long known. We learn more about how to build a birdhouse by actually building one than we do by just reading a book about how to build one. Sure, the book is helpful, but we need to work with the materials and the tools to help us understand the process.

One of the reasons that experiencing or working with a concept helps you understand and remember it is that experience requires action. Have you ever read a chapter or two in a textbook only to ask yourself a few hours later (or even a few minutes later), "What did I just read?" The consumption of media and information can be a passive experience. We read. We watch. We listen. It takes effort to keep our brains engaged in a passive experience. Moreover, educational materials usually lack the level of excitement of our favorite action movie franchise or the adorable allure of cute animal videos that abound on YouTube. It's easy for our entertainment-hungry brains to check out and stop absorbing the meaning of what we're reading. So if we can experience a subject in multiple ways, with increasing levels of engagement, we are more likely to remember what we're trying to learn. More importantly, beyond simply remembering it, we are more likely to understand its relevance to our own lives.

Writing about what you're learning can expand your understanding of a topic by helping you make connections between that topic and other things that you already understand or to other things that you're learning about. You can use writing to help you organize complex topics, to pick out main ideas, and to help you remember important concepts. If you can say it in your own words, you can move beyond merely knowing something to comprehending it. Part of this process of understanding involves extending our usual thoughts and reactions to a topic to gain new thoughts and new perspectives. Part of the process of academic writing (or even personal writing, for that matter) involves wrestling with new or contradictory ideas. And even if right now you're mostly writing for your teachers, as your academic and professional experience broadens, through writing, you can participate more fully in your academic or professional community.

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6.4: Professional Opportunities



“Help Wanted” by Brenda Gottsabend is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Good writing and communication skills can help you to be more professionally (and therefore financially) successful. As a member of a professional or working community, you may also find that you need to write. You will write for job applications, you will write resumes, and you might even write reports. You will also probably need to write informally on the job (e.g. in writing and answering email messages and perhaps informal reports). You may need to write a proposal some day or take part in an evaluation.

Writing can also help you with scheduling and time management skills (don’t forget the ever-important to-do list!). In a 2016 survey, conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, when employers were asked what they’re most looking for in a job candidate, more than 70 percent responded that they want good written communication skills. This was only exceeded by ability to work in a team at nearly 80 percent and leadership at just over 80 percent (“Job Outlook 2016”).

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6.5: Effective Communication and Persuasion

Whether for the benefit of your academic or professional life, or even for your personal life, writing is an effective tool to help you to be understood and to influence others. Much of what we've talked about so far regarding the value of writing has been about its ability to help you understand yourself and to help you understand the world. But writing also has an important power to help you to get others to understand your message.

As we've already stated in discussing its creative potential, writing gives you a voice. Writing can help you to state your position and support it in a way that might persuade others not only to understand your perspective, values, and beliefs, but also to adopt them. And when you're unsure about something, you can even use writing as a method for self-persuasion, to help you make up your mind about an important topic.

From resumes to term papers to work-related documents to journaling and self-exploration, writing is an important and powerful tool to have at the ready. This text can help you sharpen that tool and to use it to the best of your ability.

Discussion

Take two or three minutes to list as many of your own current goals that you can think of. These might be academic goals, professional goals, or personal goals. For instance, you might want to learn more about a certain academic subject or achieve a degree or certification. You might want to advance yourself in your current career, or you might want to find a job in a completely new field than the one you're working in right now. You might want to gain a new skill that will help you with a hobby that you enjoy.

Now, consider how writing might be a useful tool in helping you to achieve some of these goals. Can writing help you to explore, to create, to understand, to persuade, or to share in ways that can help you reach some of these goals? Discuss your thoughts with some classmates in a small group, and if class time allows for it, your small group might share some conclusions about the value of writing with the whole class.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Determining Your Audience and Purpose

7.1: Audience
7.2: Purpose
7.3: Appealing to Your Audience
7.4: Exercises
7.5: Tone, Voice, and Point of View

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7.1: Audience



"Theater audience wearing 3-d glasses" by Burns Library, Boston College is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Each time you communicate, in writing or otherwise, you consider whom you're communicating with and why, whether you're conscious of this or not. Think about it: if you're asking your best friend for a favor, aren't you going to ask differently than if you were asking your boss for a raise? You already have a great instinct for knowing how to shape language around the people you are addressing and what your goal is. So how can you use this instinct when writing for your college classes?

. . . . . .

A roaring political rally, a studio audience, dancing concert goers—these are all examples of different types of audiences, but an audience for your writing is a bit different. All audiences have a job to do: they are consumers of information or experiences. So when you set out to write, deciding who your audience is, is an important first step.

What is the Difference between an Audience and a Reader?

Great question! It's as simple as this: your audience is the person or group whom you intend to reach with your writing. A reader is just someone who gets their hands on your beautiful words. The reader might be the person you have in mind as you write, the audience you're trying to reach, but they might be some random person you've never thought of a day in your life. You can't always know much about random readers, but you should have some understanding of who your audience is. It's the audience that you want to focus on as you shape your message.

Isn't My Instructor Always My Audience?

Sometimes your instructor will be your intended audience, and your purpose will be to demonstrate your learning about a particular topic to earn credit on an assignment. Other times, even in your college classes, your intended audience will be a person or group outside of the instructor or your peers. This could be someone who has a personal interest in or need to read about your topic but who may never actually read your work unless it finds a place to be published like a blog or website. Understanding who your intended audience is will help you shape your writing.

Here are some questions you might think about as you're deciding what to write about and how to shape your message:

- What do I know about my audience? (age, gender, interests, biases, or concerns; Do they have an opinion already? Do they have a stake in the topic?)
- What do they know about my topic? (What does this audience *not* know about the topic? What do they need to know?)
- What details might affect the way this audience thinks about my topic? (How will facts, statistics, personal stories, examples, definitions, or other types of evidence affect this audience? What kind of effect are you going for?)

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7.2: Purpose



The purpose of argument by jon collier is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Often, you'll know your purpose at the exact moment you know your audience because they're generally a package deal:

- I need to write a letter to my landlord explaining why my rent is late so she won't be upset. (Audience = landlord; Purpose = explaining/keeping her happy)
- I want to write a proposal for my work team to persuade them to change our schedule. (Audience = work team; Purpose = persuading/to get the schedule changed)
- I have to write a research paper for my environmental science instructor comparing solar to wind power. (Audience = instructor; Purpose = analyzing/showing that you understand these two power sources)

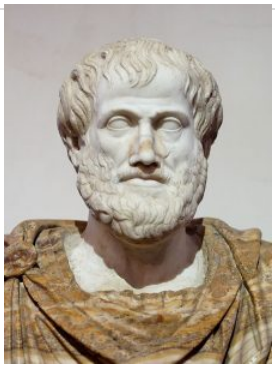
How Do I Know What My Purpose Is?

Sometimes your instructor will give you a purpose like in the third example above, but other times, especially out in the world, your purpose will depend on what effect you want your writing to have on your audience. What is the goal of your writing? What do you hope for your audience to think, feel, or do after reading it? Here are a few possibilities:

- Persuade/inspire them to act or think about an issue from your point of view.
- Challenge them/make them question their thinking or behavior.
- Argue for or against something they believe or do/change their minds or behavior.
- Inform/teach them about a topic they don't know much about.
- Connect with them emotionally/help them feel understood.

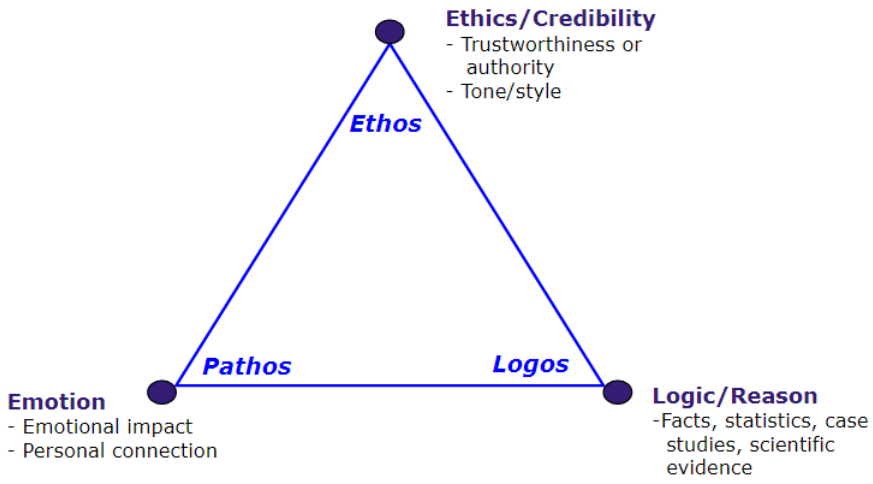
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7.3: Appealing to Your Audience



After Lysippos [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Once you know who your intended audience is and what your purpose is for writing, you can make specific decisions about how to shape your message. No matter what, you want your audience to stick around long enough to read your whole piece. How do you manage this magic trick? Easy. You appeal to them. You get to know what sparks their interest, what makes them curious, and what makes them feel understood. The one and only Aristotle provided us with three ways to appeal to an audience, and they're called *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. You'll learn more about each appeal in the discussion below, but the relationship between these three appeals is also often called *the rhetorical triangle*, and in diagram form, it looks like this:



Pathos

Latin for emotion, *pathos* is the fastest way to get your audience's attention. People tend to have emotional responses before their brains kick in and tell them to knock it off. Be careful though. Too much *pathos* can make your audience feel emotionally manipulated or angry because they're also looking for the facts to support whatever emotional claims you might be making so they know they can trust you.

Logos

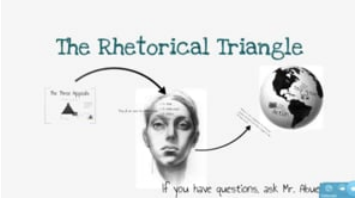
Latin for logic, *logos* is where those facts come in. Your audience will question the validity of your claims; the opinions you share in your writing need to be supported using science, statistics, expert perspective, and other types of logic. However, if you only rely on *logos*, your writing might become dry and boring, so even this should be balanced with other appeals.

Ethos

Latin for ethics, *ethos* is what you do to prove to your audience that you can be trusted, that you are a credible source of information. (See *logos*.) It's also what you do to assure them that they are good people who want to do the right thing. This is especially important when writing an argument to an audience who disagrees with you. It's much easier to encourage a disagreeable audience to listen to your point of view if you have convinced them that you respect their opinion and that you have

established credibility through the use of *logos* and *pathos*, which show that you know the topic on an intellectual and personal level.

Below is a video (found at vimeo.com/73606689) about rhetorical appeals that goes into more detail about the three appeals and how Aristotle used the rhetorical triangle to illustrate the relationship between the appeals and the audience.



For more on appealing to your audience, also see Imagining Your Audience's Needs, in the "Prewriting: Generating Ideas" section of the text.

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7.4: Exercises

Ready to practice writing for specific audiences? Below you'll find eight pictures of people with some information about each person included. Choose two people to write letters to. The purpose of your letter writing is to ask these people to give you $100. Please follow these two rules: you cannot say you will pay the money back, because you won't. You're not asking for a loan. Also, you cannot lie or exaggerate about why you need the $100. Think of a real reason. We could all use $100, after all! With these parameters in mind, how will you manage to persuade these people to give you the money?



Jeremiah is the director of a non-profit organization that helps homeless youth get an education. He is thirty-three and is married with three small children. In his free time, Jeremiah enjoys practicing karate, hiking with his wife and kids, and reading historical fiction. ("Listening at a conference" by BMA is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0)



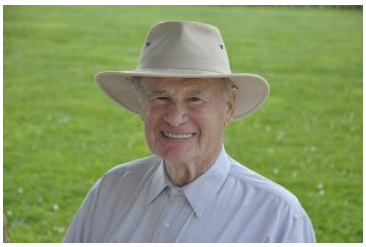
Deborah is a forty-year-old professional violinist who plays full time in the Portland Symphony Orchestra. She considers the orchestra to be her family. She isn't married and doesn't have children. When she's not practicing her instrument, Deborah enjoys painting with acrylics and cross-country skiing. ("Barka Fabianova" by Cordella Hagmann is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Ronaldo is a twenty-seven-year-old middle school biology teacher who also coaches track and field. He and his wife have just adopted two children from Haiti, so most of Ronaldo's free time is spent reading parenting books and being the best father he can be. ("Slongood" by bidding is licensed under CC BY 2.0)



Grace is a twenty-year-old Marine in a family of Marines. She met her partner Jane during basic training, and they are planning to get married after they've both finished college. Grace's hobbies include kickboxing, wakeboarding, and training her dog, Boss. ("Expert Infantry" by DM-ST-86-05538 is licensed under CC BY 2.0)



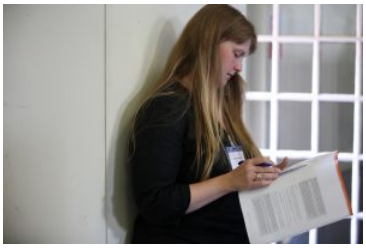
Henry is a retired CEO for a fishing rod manufacturing company. At the age of eighty-four, he still enjoys fly fishing all over the Pacific Northwest. He is recently widowed and has seven grandchildren who go fishing with him regularly. (“The Grandfather” by Xavez is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0)



Sophia is a dancer, dance teacher, and new mother. She just turned thirty and loves to travel with her husband. Her goal is to see every continent (except for Antarctica) before the age of forty. So far, she’s been to North and South America, Africa, and Asia. (“New Mother New Baby” by Satoshi Ohki is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Larry is a foreman for a construction company that builds skyscrapers and other types of office buildings. He’s fifty-seven and has saved enough to be able to retire by the age of sixty, when he hopes to move to the mountains and build a log cabin with his partner David. (“Construction Worker” by Sascha Kohlmann is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0)



Michelle is a pediatric doctor who specializes in childhood leukemia. She is thirty-five and newly married to an ER doctor. They support each other’s research projects and other professional goals. They don’t want children, feeling that their work is their primary life focus. (“Waiting to Speak” by The BMA is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0)

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7.5: Tone, Voice, and Point of View

Yo! Wassup?
Hey, how you doin'?
Hello, how are you today?

Which of the above greetings sounds most formal? Which sounds the most informal? What causes the change in tone?

Your voice can't actually be heard when you write, but it can be conveyed through the words you choose, the order you place them in, and the point of view from which you write. When you decide to write something for a specific audience, you often know instinctively what tone of voice will be most appropriate for that audience: serious, professional, funny, friendly, neutral, etc.

For a discussion of analyzing an author's point of view when reading a text, see Point of View in the "Writing about Texts" section.

What is point of view, and how do I know which one to use?

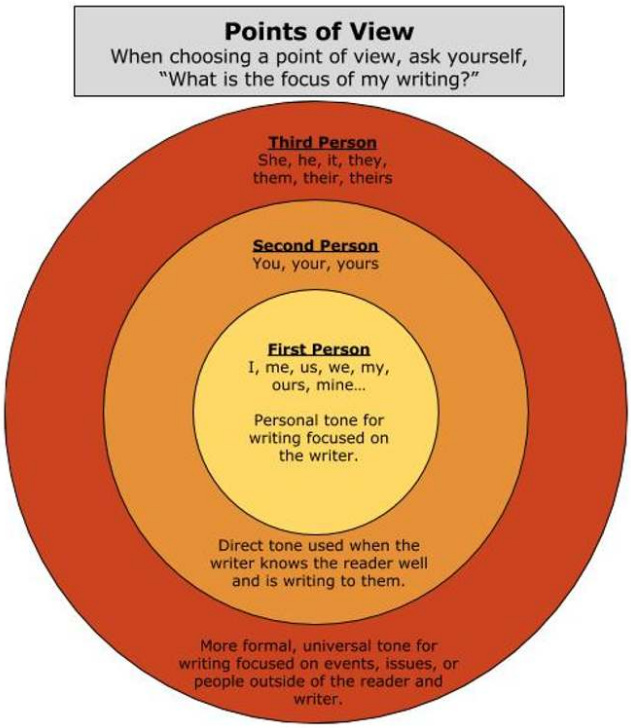
Point of view can be tricky, so this is a good question. Point of view is the perspective from which you're writing, and it dictates what your focus is. Consider the following examples:

- I love watching the leaves change in the fall. (First person point of view)
- You will love watching the leaves change color. (Second person)
- The leaves in fall turn many vibrant colors. (Third person)

Which of the above sentences focuses most clearly on the leaves? Third person, right? The first person sentence focuses on what "I" love and the second person sentence focuses on what "you" will love.

- **First person** uses the following pronouns: I, me, my, us, we, myself, our, ours … any words that include the speaker/writer turn the sentence into first person.
- **Second person** uses any form of the word "you," which has the effect of addressing the reader.
- **Third person** uses pronouns like he, she, it, they, them … any words that direct the reader to a person or thing that is not the writer or reader turn the sentence into third person.

That's a lot to think about. When is it okay to use each of these points of view?



Many of your college instructors will ask you to write in third person only and will want you to avoid first or second person. Why do you think that is? One important reason is that third person point of view focuses on a person or topic outside yourself or the reader, making it the most professional, academic, and objective way to write. The goal of third person point of view is to remove personal, subjective bias from your writing, at least in theory. Most of the writing you will do in college will require you to focus on ideas, people, and issues outside yourself, so third person will be the most appropriate. This point of view also helps your readers stay focused on the topic instead of thinking about you or themselves.

The best answer to your question is that the point of view you choose to write in will depend on your audience and purpose. If your goal is to relate to your audience in a personal way about a topic that you have experience with, then it may be appropriate to use first person point of view to share your experience and connect with your audience.

The least commonly used point of view is second person, especially in academic writing, because most of the time you will not know your audience well enough to write directly to them. The exception is if you're writing a letter or directing your writing to a very specific group whom you know well. (Notice that I'm using second person in this paragraph to directly address you. I feel okay about doing this because I want you to do specific things, and I have a pretty good idea who my audience is: reading and writing students.) The danger of using second person is that this point of view can implicate readers in your topic when you don't mean to do that. If you're talking about crime rates in your city, and you write something like, "When you break into someone's house, this affects their property value," you are literally saying that the reader breaks into people's houses. Of course, that's not what you mean. You didn't intend to implicate the readers this way, but that's one possible consequence of using second person. In other words, you might accidentally say that readers have done something that they haven't or know, feel, or believe something that they don't.

Pro Tip

Even when you intend to use third person in an academic essay, it's fine in a rough draft to write "I think that" or "I believe" and then to delete these phrases in the final draft. This is especially true for the thesis statement. You want to eliminate the first person from the final draft because it moves the focus—the subject and verb of the sentence—to the writer rather than the main point. That weakens the point because it focuses on the least important aspect of the sentence and also because it sounds like a disclaimer. I might say "I think" because I'm not sure, or "I believe" because I want to stress the point that this is only my opinion. Of course, it's okay to use a disclaimer if you really mean to do so, and it's also fine to use first person to render personal experience or give an anecdote.

Does anything else affect the tone of my writing?

Yes! Many times writers are so focused on the ideas they want to convey that they forget the importance of something they may never think about: sentence variety. The length of your sentences matters. If you start every sentence with the same words, readers may get bored. If all of your sentences are short and choppy, your writing may sound unsophisticated or rushed. Some short sentences are nice though. They help readers' brains catch up. This is a lot to think about while you're writing your first draft though, so I recommend saving this concern for your second or third draft.

Visit the Purdue OWL page, "Strategies for Variation" for some examples of sentence variety and exercises that will improve your sentence variety superpowers.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Prewriting—Generating Ideas

8.1: Selecting and Narrowing a Topic

8.2: Strategies for Getting Started

8.3: Imagining Your Audience's Needs

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8.1: Selecting and Narrowing a Topic



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When you need to write something longer than a text or an email, whether it’s a class assignment, a report for work, or a personal writing task, there’s work to be done before you dive in and begin writing. This phase is sometimes called prewriting (even though some types of prewriting involve actual writing).

Note that even though instructors may describe a writing process as having steps that seem to go in order, writers usually skip back and forth between those steps as they work toward a final draft. While you’re in the early stage of prewriting, you might use freewriting (a technique for generating text that you’ll learn more about in the section titled “Strategies for Getting Started“) but then use that technique again after revising your first draft. When instructors describe writing as “recursive,” this process is what they are talking about. The techniques described for prewriting may come in handy later in your own writing process.

. . . . . .

If you’re working on a class assignment, you may get to select your own topic or a topic may be assigned to you.

If you get to choose your topic, be sure that you understand the kinds of topics that will fit the assignment. For example, if your instructor asks you to write an argument about a local problem in your community, you wouldn’t choose to write about the national debt–that’s not a local problem, but a national one. You might try some of the techniques in this resource, like freewriting, listing, or clustering, to discover topics you are interested in. You might use your library’s online databases to search for interesting topics, especially databases that give pros and cons for current issues.

But even if the instructor assigns the topic, you can find ways to make it your own.

Types of Assignments from Instructors

Most of the time, instructors give specific assignments that relate to the course and perhaps to assigned readings or discussions from class. When you are given a specific topic, be sure that you understand what you have been asked to do. Look for the verbs used in the assignment. Here are some common verbs from writing assignments and what they usually mean:

Summarize: If you are asked to write a summary of something you’ve read, you will be giving the main points and the supporting points from the text. A summary usually does not include your personal opinion.

Respond: When you are asked to respond to a text, you can give your opinion in a variety of ways. You might talk about the quality of the text, connections you made with the text, or whether you agree or disagree with the author’s ideas. You may need to incorporate a little bit of summary so that the reader has enough background to understand your response. The summary might be in the form of a single paragraph after your introduction, it might be a few sentences within your introduction, or it might be incorporated in multiple paragraphs in a sentence or two.

Analyze: An analysis breaks something down into parts in order to understand the whole. See discussions of sentence-level analysis and paragraph analysis in the “Writing about Texts” section.

Synthesize: A synthesis combines two or more ideas into a larger whole. For more on synthesis, see “Drawing Conclusions and Synthesizing New Ideas” in the “Writing about Texts” section.

Compare and contrast: When you are asked to compare and contrast (or sometimes the instructor will just say compare, but mean both), you will be looking at two items and stating how they are alike and how they are different.

Reflect: A reflection asks you to deeply consider something, often on a personal basis. For example, you might be asked to write a personal reflection about your own writing or about your progress during a course. Or you might be asked to reflect on how a particular issue affects you.

Other terms: There are many possible verbs that you might find in an assignment. If you are unsure what the assignment calls for, be sure to ask your instructor.

Picking Your Own Topic When One Isn't Assigned

For some assignments, you may be able to write about a topic that is personally significant to you. Being able to write about a topic like this can improve your motivation. Be wary, though, of just writing opinion without backing up your ideas with reasons and evidence that your readers will find convincing. If you want to write about a deeply personal topic, be sure that you are willing to share that with others and also consider whether or not your readers want to know that information about you.

One way to narrow your topic is to decide what you DON'T want to write about. What ideas or subtopics could you eliminate?

Using Preliminary Research

Another way to narrow your topic is to do some preliminary research–not the kind of research you would include in an essay, but rather quick online research to inform yourself about the topic. This is one example of when it's okay to use a simple Google search or use Wikipedia. Once you see what other people are writing about your topic, it can help you see areas that are interesting to you, and it can also help you understand what people, in general, agree on and what is still undecided and needs to be further explored.



Check Your Understanding: Preliminary Research

Want to try some preliminary research? Try searching for these topics in Google and Wikipedia, for general information.

Search for "gravity hill" in Google.

1. How many of the sources on the first page of results are from Wikipedia?
2. Where is the gravity hill in South Dakota located?

Search for T. Rex, the band, in Wikipedia.

1. What later bands and musicians made explicit references to T. Rex?
2. What is the first source listed in the "References" section at the end of the Wikipedia article?

See the Appendix, Results for the “Check Your Understanding” Activities, for answers.

Using Purpose to Determine Topic

You can also use your purpose for writing to define your topic:

Informative: if your purpose in writing is to inform your readers, what are topics that you already know a lot about? What are some interesting topics that you could easily research?

Persuasive: if your purpose is to persuade readers to think a certain way or to take an action, what are some topics that you feel strongly about? What are some topics that are currently under discussion that you could explore and form an opinion on?

Reflective: if your purpose is to reflect on a personal experience or on your learning process, you can explore your knowledge and experience.

Analytical: if your purpose is to analyze something (usually a text of some kind), is there an assigned list or a specific text? If you get to choose, what books, essays, poems, films, songs, etc. have you recently been exposed to that you could analyze?

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8.2: Strategies for Getting Started

How do you start writing a draft? There isn't just one right way to begin writing. Some people dive right in, writing in complete sentences and paragraphs, while others start with some form of brainstorming or freewriting. Others choose a strategy based on the writing task and how familiar they are with the topic. A writing instructor may want you to try out different methods so that you can figure out what works best for you. You may want to have more than one method in case you get stuck and need to break out of a writing block. Here are some common strategies for getting started (sometimes called invention strategies).

There are several methods that help you generate ideas and see connections between ideas without writing in complete sentences. We can call these methods "brainstorming." They all have some common rules:

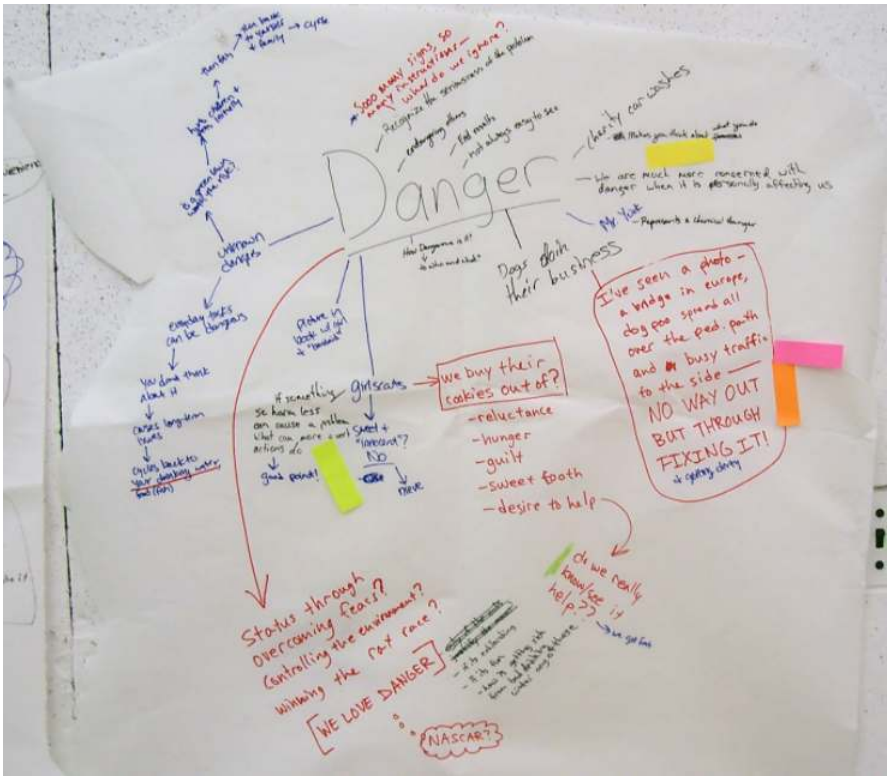
- Write down all of your ideas; don't eliminate anything until you are done brainstorming.
- Don't bother with editing at this stage.
- Work as quickly as you can.
- If you get stuck, stop and review your work OR get someone else's input.
- Each method can work as a solo technique or with others.

Clustering

A cluster is a method of brainstorming that allows you to draw connections between ideas. This technique is also called a tree diagram, a map, a spider diagram, and probably many other terms.

1. To make a cluster, start with a big concept. Write this in the center of a page or screen and circle it.
2. Think of ideas that connect to the big concept. Write these around the big concept and draw connecting lines to the big concept.
3. As you think of ideas that relate to any of the others, create more connections by writing those ideas around the one idea that connects them and draw connecting lines.

Here's an example:



"Danger" by Parhamr is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

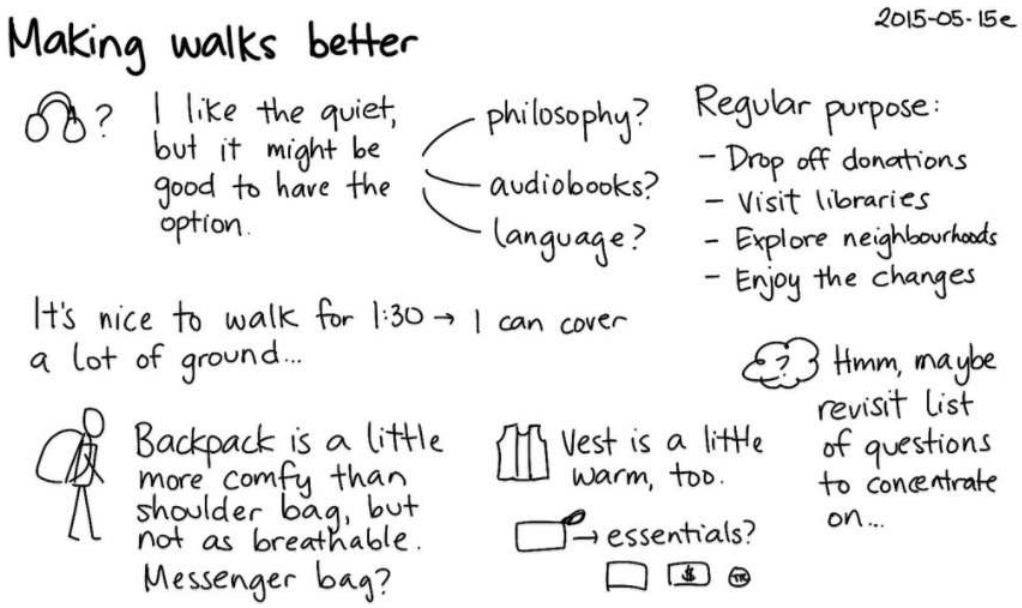
Notice that you can use color, larger type, etc., to create organization and emphasis. Remember that your cluster doesn't need to look like anyone else's. Create the cluster in the way that makes the most sense to you. Once you have finished the cluster, you can use another technique to generate actual text.

Listing

Listing is just what it sounds like: making a list of ideas. Here are two kinds of lists you might use.

Brainstorm list: Simply make a list of all the ideas related to your topic. Do not censor your ideas; write everything down, knowing you can cross some off later.

Here's an example:



"Making Walks Better" by Sacha Chua is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

What I know/don't know lists: If you know that your topic will require research, you can make two lists. The first will be a list of what you already know about your topic; the second will be a list of what you don't know and will have to research.

Outlining

Outlining is a useful pre-writing tool when you know your topic well or at least know the areas you want to explore. An outline can be written before you begin to write, and it can range from formal to informal. However, many writers work best from a list of ideas or from freewriting. (Note: A reverse outline can be useful once you have written a draft, during the revision process. For more on reverse outlining, see the "Revising" section.)

Traditional Outline

A traditional outline uses a numbering and indentation scheme to help organize your thoughts. Generally, you begin with your main point, perhaps stated as a thesis (see "Finding the Thesis" in the "Drafting Section"), and place the subtopics, usually the main supports for your thesis/main point, and finally flesh out the details underneath each subtopic. Each subtopic is numbered and has the same level of indentation. Details under each subtopic are given a different style of number or letter and are indented further to the right. It's expected that each subtopic will merit at least two details. NOTE: Most word-processing applications include outlining capabilities.

Phrase: Some outlines use a phrase for each item.

Sentence: Some outlines, particularly for oral presentations, use a complete sentence for each item.

Paragraph: Rarely, an outline may use a paragraph for each item.

Q&A: Some outlines are organized in a question/answer format.

Here's an example:

I. Major Idea

a. Supporting Idea

i. Detail
ii. Detail

b. Supporting Idea

i. Detail
ii. Detail
iii. Detail

Rough Outline

A rough outline is less formal than a traditional outline. Working from a list, a brainstorm, or a freewrite, organize the ideas into the order that makes sense to you. You might try color-coding like items and then grouping the items with the same color together. Another method is to print your prewriting, then cut it up into smaller pieces, and finally put the pieces into piles of related items. Tape the like items together, then put the pieces together into a whole list/outline.

Ready to try an outline? Watch the YouTube video below, “Outlines” from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, to help yourself get started.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sp0MWYbLUFU

Freewriting

Freewriting is a technique that actually generates text, some of which you may eventually use in your final draft. The rules are similar to brainstorming and clustering:

- Write as much as you can, as quickly as you can.
- Don’t edit or cross anything out. (Note: if you must edit as you go, just write the correction and keep moving along. Don’t go for the perfect word, just get the idea on the page.)
- Keep your pen, pencil, or fingers on the keyboard moving.
- You don’t need to stay on topic or write in any order. Feel free to follow tangents.
- If you get stuck, write a repeating phrase until your brain gets tired and gives you something else to write. (Variation: I like to complain at this point, so I write about the fact that I’m stuck, I really hate having to do this, why isn’t it lunch-time already, etc.)
- Freewriting can be used just to get your mind working so that you can write an actual draft. In this case, you can write about whatever you want. Freewriting to generate ideas usually works best when you start with a prompt–an idea or question that gets you started. An example of a writing prompt might be “What do I already know about this topic?” Or “What is the first idea I have about my topic?” If you started with a list or an outline, you can freewrite about each item.

Looping

Looping is a technique built on freewriting. It can help you move within a topic to get all related ideas into writing.

1. To begin, start with a freewrite on a topic. Set a timer and write for 5-15 minutes (whatever you think will be enough time to get going but not so much that you will want to stop).
2. When the time period ends, read over what you’ve written and circle anything that needs to be fleshed out or that branches into new ideas. Select one of these for your next loop.
3. Freewrite again for the same time period, using the idea you selected from the first freewrite.
4. Repeat until you feel you have covered the topic or you are out of time.

Asking Questions

To stimulate ideas, you can ask questions that help you generate content. Use some of the examples below or come up with your own.

Problem/Solution: What is the problem that your writing is trying to solve? Who or what is part of the problem? What solutions can you think of? How would each solution be accomplished?

Cause/Effect: What is the reason behind your topic? Why is it an issue? Conversely, what is the effect of your topic? Who will be affected by it?

The set of journalist's questions is probably the most familiar for writers. Using the journalist's questions, sometimes called the five W's, is an effective way to write about the basic information about your topic. Here are the questions:

- Who: Who is involved? Who is affected?
- What: What is happening? What will happen? What should happen?
- Where: Where is it happening?
- When: When is it happening?
- Why/how: Why is this happening? How is it happening?

If you imagine the questions as a cube, and separate why and how into two, you can use that visual image to remember the six questions.

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8.3: Imagining Your Audience's Needs

Here are some common audiences for you to consider before you begin drafting an assignment (also see the "Audience" section in the "Determining Audience and Purpose" portion of this text):

Yourself

One purpose for writing is to figure out what you think and believe before you share your ideas with other people. What do you want to say? What do you want to find out? What do you want to decide? Sometimes you will keep this type of writing private, but sometimes you may revise for another audience.

Your Instructor

It may seem obvious as a student that your instructor is part of your audience. Let's take a moment to consider what expectations your instructor may have. You instructor may expect that

- You have read any assigned material before writing. What do you need to write to show your instructor you have read this material?
- You have understood the assignment given. To show this, pay particular attention to the verbs in the assignment. Are you doing the actions required? If the assignment says "analyze X," have you done so? Do you understand what it means to analyze? (For more about verbs in assignments, see the Understanding Assignments handout from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Writing Center, writingcenter.unc.edu.)
- If assigned, you have done research for your topic. To show your research, you will want to use summaries, paraphrasing, and quotations from your sources, using appropriate citation. (See the Drafting section for help with summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting, and see the "Crediting and Citing Your Sources" section for help with citations.)
- You will use the assigned academic format, such as MLA (see the appendix titled "Resources for Working with MLA"). You will follow the instructions. Re-read the assignment to make sure you are following each step.
- You will work hard on your assignment and spend time making it as good as possible, including spending considerable time proofreading and editing. Taking these steps shows that you are serious about your work, and that it is important enough for others to read.

Notice that fulfilling these expectations will also help you reach any other possible readers of your work.

Fellow Students

In writing classes, students often read each other's work and give feedback. To meet the needs of this audience, consider what they know and don't know about your topic. When you are writing outside of a classroom situation, you might consider an audience of fellow writers or others who are involved in your project, if any.

The "General" Reader

When instructors use the term "general reader," what do they mean? If you are given an assignment that says your audience is "the general reader," that usually means that you are expected to write to an audience with at least some college education who is aware of your topic, but not an expert on your topic. Newspapers, for example, write for a general reader, meaning that they expect a variety of people, from various backgrounds, to read the articles. That means you must consider viewpoints and experiences that do not mirror your own. When instructors talk about an academic audience, they usually mean that you must use evidence that is acceptable to a variety of educated people, using academic sources rather than popular sources, and that you will not state opinions without providing proof to support your view. Here are some questions to help you think about your topic:

What would a general reader know about your topic? What wouldn't they know?

What kinds of evidence and reasons are acceptable to an audience that does not share the same background and beliefs as you?

What kinds of evidence and reason are acceptable in an academic community? Have you used academic sources? Are your sources credible? (For some guidance on finding credible sources see "Finding Quality Texts" in the Information Literacy section.)

A Target Audience

Sometimes you will have the opportunity to write for a specific group of people. For example, if you are writing about a problem in your community, such as the proposed location of a new composting facility, your audience would probably be the people in your community or perhaps local officials who have the power to make the decision about the location. If you are writing an email to your supervisor requesting a change in your work responsibilities, your audience is your supervisor–a specific person. When you know the audience, you can anticipate the kinds of reasoning and evidence that the audience will expect, and you will know what tone and level of formality is appropriate. If you don't know your audience well, you may need to do some research or at the very least imagine what they are like based on educated guesses.

The Opposing Viewpoint

When you write an argument, one potential audience is the people who disagree with your opinion. To do so effectively, you will need to understand their point of view and their objections to yours. Consider writing out what the opposing viewpoints are and what kinds of information would someone with the opposing view need from you in order to change their mind?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Drafting

9.10: Writing Summaries
9.11: Paraphrasing
9.12: Quoting
9.1: Organizing Your Ideas and Looking for Connections
9.2: Finding the Thesis
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9.4: Writing Paragraphs
9.5: The Paragraph Body: Supporting Your Ideas
9.6: Developing Relationships between Ideas
9.7: Patterns of Organization and Methods of Development
9.8: Writing Introductions
9.9: Writing Conclusions

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9.10: Writing Summaries

A summary is a short overview of the main points of a text. The purpose of a summary is to quickly give the reader or listener an idea of what this material is saying. You may find it helpful to create summaries of your own work, but more often, you will create summaries of material by other authors, such as articles, plays, films, lectures, stories, or presentations.

Why Summarize?

At some point in your classes, you will likely be given an assignment to summarize a specific text, an assignment in which summary is the sole intent. You will also use summaries in more holistic ways, though, incorporating them along with paraphrase, quotation, and your own opinions into more complex pieces of writing. You might summarize for several reasons, both in your time as a student and in your life outside of education.

Here are some common ones:

- A summary can show your understanding of the main points of an assigned reading or viewing, so your instructor might ask you to summarize in order to know that you've understood the material.
- You might summarize a section from a source, or even the whole source, when the ideas in that source are critical to an assignment you are working on and you feel they need to be included, but they would take up too much space in their original form.
- You might also summarize when the general ideas from a source are important to include in your work, but the details included in the same section as those main ideas aren't needed for you to make your point. For example, technical documents or in-depth studies might go into much, much more detail than you are likely to need to support a point you are making for a general audience. These are situations in which a summary might be a good option.
- Summarizing is also an excellent way to double-check that you understand a text–if you can summarize the ideas in it, you likely have a good grasp on the information it is presenting. This can be helpful for school-related work, such as studying for an exam or researching a topic for a paper, but is also useful in daily life when you encounter texts on topics that are personally or professionally interesting to you.

What Makes Something a Summary?

When you ask yourself, after reading an article (and maybe even reading it two or three times), "What was that article about?" and you end up jotting down–from memory, without returning to the original article to use its language or phrases–three things that stood out as the author's main points, you are summarizing. Summaries have several key characteristics.

You're summarizing well when you

- Use your own words.
- Significantly condense the original text.
- Provide accurate representations of the main points of the text they summarize.
- Avoid personal opinion.

Summaries are much shorter than the original material—a general rule is that they should be no more than 10% to 15% the length of the original, and they are often even shorter than this.

It can be easy and feel natural, when summarizing an article, to include our own opinions. We may agree or disagree strongly with what this author is saying, or we may want to compare their information with the information presented in another source, or we may want to share our own opinion on the topic. Often, our opinions slip into summaries even when we work diligently to keep them separate. These opinions are not the job of a summary, though. A summary should *only* highlight the main points of the article.



Focusing on just the ideas that best support a point we want to make or ignoring ideas that don't support that point can be tempting. This approach has two significant problems, though:

First, it no longer correctly represents the original text, so it misleads your reader about the ideas presented in that text. A summary should give your reader an accurate idea of what they can expect if we pick up the original article to read.

Second, it undermines your own credibility as an author to not represent this information accurately. If readers cannot trust an author to accurately represent source information, they may not be as likely to trust that author to thoroughly and accurately present a reasonable point.

How Should I Organize a Summary?

Like traditional essays, summaries have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. What these components look like will vary some based on the purpose of the summary you're writing. The introduction, body, and conclusion of work focused specifically around summarizing something is going to be a little different than in work where summary is not the primary goal.

Introducing a Summary

One of the trickier parts of creating a summary is making it clear that this is a summary of someone else's work; these ideas are not your original ideas. You will almost always begin a summary with an introduction to the author, article, and publication so the reader knows what we are about to read. This information will appear again in your bibliography, but is also useful here so the reader can follow the conversation happening in your paper. You will want to provide it in both places.

In summary-focused work, this introduction should accomplish a few things:

- Introduce the name of the author whose work you are summarizing.
- Introduce the title of the text being summarized.
- Introduce where this text was presented (if it's an art installation, where is it being shown? If it's an article, where was that article published? Not all texts will have this component–for example, when summarizing a book written by one author, the title of the book and name of that author are sufficient information for your readers to easily locate the work you are summarizing).
- State the main ideas of the text you are summarizing—just the big-picture components.
- Give context when necessary. Is this text responding to a current event? That might be important to know. Does this author have specific qualifications that make them an expert on this topic? This might also be relevant information.

So, for example, if you were to get an assignment asking you to summarize Matthew Hutson's *Atlantic* article, "Beyond the Five Senses" (found at www.theatlantic.com) an introduction for that summary might look something like this:

> In his July 2017 article in *The Atlantic*, "Beyond the Five Senses," Matthew Hutson explores ways in which potential technologies might expand our sensory perception of the world. He notes that some technologies, such as cochlear implants, are already accomplishing a version of this for people who do not have full access to one of the five senses. In much of the article, though, he seems more interested in how technology might expand the ways in which we sense things. Some of these technologies are based in senses that can be seen in nature, such as echolocation, and others seem more deeply rooted in science fiction. However, all of the examples he gives consider how adding new senses to the ones we already experience might change how we perceive the world around us.

However, you will probably find yourself more frequently using summary as just one component of work with a wide range of goals (not just a goal to "summarize X").

Summary introductions in these situations still generally need to

- Name the author.
- Name the text being summarized.
- State just the relevant context, if there is any (maybe the author has a specific credential that makes their work on this topic carry more weight than it would otherwise, or maybe the study they generated is now being used as a benchmark for additional research).
- Introduce the author's full name (first and last names) the first time you summarize part of their text. If you summarize pieces of the same text more than once in a work you are writing, each time you use their text after that initial introduction of the source, you will only use the author's last name as you introduce that next summary component.

Presenting the "Meat" (or Body) of a Summary

Again, this will look a little different depending on the purpose of the summary work you are doing. Regardless of how you are using summary, you will introduce the main ideas throughout your text with transitional phrasing, such as "One of [Author's]

biggest points is…," or "[Author's] primary concern about this solution is…."

If you are responding to a "write a summary of X" assignment, the body of that summary will expand on the main ideas you stated in the introduction of the summary, although this will all still be very condensed compared to the original. What are the key points the author makes about each of those big-picture main ideas? Depending on the kind of text you are summarizing, you may want to note how the main ideas are supported (although, again, be careful to avoid making your own opinion about those supporting sources known).

When you are summarizing with an end goal that is broader than just summary, the body of your summary will still present the idea from the original text that is relevant to the point you are making (condensed and in your own words).

Since it is much more common to summarize just a single idea or point from a text in this type of summarizing (rather than all of its main points), it is important to make sure you understand the larger points of the original text. For example, you might find that an article provides an example that opposes its main point in order to demonstrate the range of conversations happening on the topic it covers. This opposing point, though, isn't the main point of the article, so just summarizing this one opposing example would not be an accurate representation of the ideas and points in that text.

Concluding a Summary

For writing in which summary is the sole purpose, here are some ideas for your conclusion.

Now that we've gotten a little more information about the main ideas of this piece, are there any connections or loose ends to tie up that will help your reader fully understand the points being made in this text? This is the place to put those.

This is also a good place to state (or restate) the things that are most important for your readers to remember after reading your summary.

When your writing has a primary goal other than summary, your conclusion should

- Include an in-text citation, if appropriate. (To learn how to do this correctly, see the discussion of in-text citation in "Crediting and Citing Your Sources," part of the "Using Sources Correctly" section of this text.)
- Discuss the summary you've just presented. How does it support, illustrate, or give new information about the point you are making in your writing? Connect it to your own main point for that paragraph so readers understand clearly why it deserves the space it takes up in your work. (Note that this is still not giving your opinion on the material you've summarized, just making connections between it and your own main points.)

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9.11: Paraphrasing



Paraphrasing is another way of presenting ideas from source material in your own words, but without the condensing that happens in a summary. Instead, paraphrases stay approximately the same length as the original source material being paraphrased.

Why paraphrase?

To Demonstrate Understanding

Paraphrasing can demonstrate your understanding of a text, including its more complex details and connections between its main points, and can also help you double-check the depth of your understanding of a text.

To Provide Support

You might paraphrase a section from a source (unlike summary, it is unlikely that you will ever need to paraphrase an entire source) when an idea or point in that source is important to an assignment you are working on and you feel it needs to be included, but you can rephrase it in a way that fits your work without losing any key information.



Use paraphrase instead of direct quote unless you have compelling reasons to preserve the exact language of the original text. Often, the reason to preserve the original text in a direct quote is because that text uses specialized language that you can't easily rephrase. As much of your work as possible should be in your own voice.

For example, let's look at the last paragraph of the *Scientific American* article (found at www.scientificamerican.com) "Are you a Magnet for Mosquitoes?," about why mosquitoes are more attracted to some humans than others. The sentence, "Scientists that study human odors and genetics have previously suggested scent cues associated with genetics are likely controlled via the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) genes" could be a good candidate for a direct quote because I wouldn't know how to paraphrase the part about MHC genes.

The sentence that follows, though, says this:

> "Those genes appear to play a role in odor production and also in mammals' mating choices—because humans and mice alike appear to prefer mates that smell less similar to themselves, which scientists have theorized may be a natural control against inbreeding."

Since there isn't particularly specialized or original language in here that must be preserved, this second sentence is a good candidate for paraphrase. One way (of many possibilities!) this might look is like this:

> These same genes that might be attracting mosquitoes more to some of us than to others could also be helping us choose partners that we aren't likely to be related to.

What Makes Something a Paraphrase?

A paraphrase

- Is in your own words.
- Is not condensed.
- Avoids personal opinion.

- Is completely rephrased from the original.

Like summary, a paraphrase is someone else's ideas rewritten in your own words. Unlike summary, though, paraphrase should not be condensed—the ideas as you write them should take up about the same amount of space as they do in the original text. A paraphrase should not include your own opinions about the topic, what the author of the text is saying about it, or how that author is presenting their point

It can be easy, when writing a paraphrase, to rely on some of the original author's phrasing or direct synonyms for the author's original words. Remember that a paraphrase must be entirely your own writing, not just phrases or words substituted in the same sentence structure, length, etc. used by the original text. Write paraphrases in sentence structures that are natural to you and true to your own writing voice. The only job of a paraphrase is to accurately and completely represent the relevant idea presented in the text you are paraphrasing.

How Should I Organize a Paraphrase?

It is not likely that you will encounter an assignment that solely requires you to paraphrase a text. Instead, you will use paraphrase to support your own points and ideas in work with a wide range of goals. That said, there are still some guidelines for incorporating paraphrase into your work:

- Introduce the author and original text, just as you would for a summary.
- If there is relevant context, mention that as well.
- Then, restate the part of the original text that you want to use *into your own original language and sentence structures.*
- Include a parenthetical citation (if appropriate) at the end of the paraphrased material. (To learn how to do this correctly, see the discussion of in-text citation in "Crediting and Citing Your Sources," part of the "Using Sources Correctly" section of this text.)
- After delivering and citing the paraphrased material, reconnect that information to your own topic and point.



Check Your Understanding:

Creating a Paraphrase

Here is a brief passage from Sarah Boxer's article in The Atlantic, "An Artist for the Instagram Age": "The fact that some folks have managed to make the scene while others get left out in the cold is integral to the excitement of participatory art. The thrill is

akin to exotic travel, or getting to see Hamilton. Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs."

Which of the following is an appropriate paraphrase of this passage? Why is that one "good" and the other one less functional as a paraphrase?

1. The truth that many people have been able to attend these events as others have been shut out of them is key to what makes this kind of art appealing. The excitement is similar to visiting foreign countries or attending a showing of a sold-out musical. Since some people who wish to attend can't do so, these art forms, despite not necessarily wanting to, often end up denying access to many would-be attendees.
2. Boxer notes that this kind of art only maintains its appeal as long as there are more people clamoring to view it than can possibly actually view it. This reliance on scarcity means these artists are ultimately relying on elitist principles to find their success and remain in demand.

See the Appendix, Results for the "Check Your Understanding" Activities, for answers.

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9.12: Quoting

A quotation (sometimes called a direct quotation) is when you use the exact language from a source and place that language into your own paper. This is significantly different from both paraphrase and summary, as you do not rephrase any part of the original language into your own words—in fact, it is important when directly quoting a source to be careful to exactly copy the source's original language word for word.

Why Quote?

- To retain the powerful, specialized, or unique language of the original
- To demonstrate authority
- To present an opposing view

If the original text is phrased in a way that is particularly powerful and paraphrasing it would be likely to weaken it, direct quotation is a good option. This is also true when the language of the original source is so special or unique that it can't be reasonably rephrased.

Direct quotation can demonstrate that existing authoritative sources support a point you are making. It can also present an opposing view to your own for you to then discuss. It can be useful to present opposing views as direct quotes to avoid the risk of personal bias affecting the language of a paraphrase.

Why It's Important to Limit Quotes

It is generally a good idea to limit quotes—don't rely too heavily on them in a paper. Remember that most of your paper should be in your own words and in your own voice. It's also a good rule of thumb to avoid using unnecessarily long quotes. If a quote is longer than a sentence or two, it is a good idea to examine whether the full quote is needed or if a summary, paraphrase, or just part of the quote would do the job you need done.

If you do find you need to use only part of a quote, it is very important to make sure that the part of the quote you are using doesn't change the meaning of the quote. Be careful to retain the parts of the quote that accurately represent what the author was originally saying.

How Should I Organize a Quote?

Like paraphrase, quotation will only play a supporting role in your written work. Many of the guidelines for incorporating quotation into your written work will look familiar if you have already read the summary and paraphrase sections of this text, but quotation does have some special rules.

Introduce

Introduce the author and original text (and potentially context), just as you would for a summary or paraphrase. Often this introduction is only an introductory phrase, in which case it would be followed by a comma and the quote would begin immediately after this phrase as part of the same sentence. Example: According to Amelia Smith, a researcher affiliated with Harvard, "[insert quote here]."

Deliver

After introducing the author and text, you will deliver the quote. This is often as simple as copying and pasting the relevant material from the original text. Direct quotes need to have quotation marks ("") around them, the first quotation mark just before the first word of the quote and the end quotation mark just after the last word of the quote.

The only exception to the requirement of quotation marks is when using a block quote. A block quote is quoted material that takes up space on four or more consecutive lines of your paper. This kind of quote has a significantly different set of formatting rules, but should also be used very sparingly because it takes up so much valuable space in your paper. If you're interested in learning more about what block quotes do differently, have a look at the "MLA Formatting Quotations" article from the Purdue OWL (at owl.english.purdue.edu); scroll down a bit to find the section titled "Long Quotations".

Cite

Include a parenthetical citation (if appropriate) at the end of the quote. (To learn how to do this correctly, see the discussion of in-text citation in "Crediting and Citing Your Sources," part of the "Using Sources Correctly" section of this text.)

Reconnect

After delivering and citing the quote, reconnect that information to your own topic and point.



Check Your Understanding: Work with Quotation

What the reconnection component of using a quote looks like is going to vary depending on the type of essay you're writing, your intended audience, and how you're presenting the information to that audience. Introduction, delivery, and citation tend to look pretty similar regardless of those factors, so let's practice those components here.

Using the same article as in the "Paraphrasing" section (see the section just before this one), written by Sarah Boxer and published online in *The Atlantic*, I'm going to quote just the third sentence of the passage we looked at in the paraphrasing activity: "Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs."

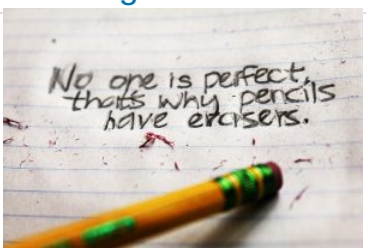
Which of these uses of that sentence would be a correct way to use it as a quote in my own essay? There may be more than one correct answer.

1. As Sarah Boxer observes in her article about Yayoi Kusama's "Infinity Mirrors" exhibit, "Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs."
2. Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs (Boxer).
3. Carrying these ideas into the art world, Sarah Boxer notes, "everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience… their intentions and messages are democratic."
4. One article published recently in *The Atlantic* addresses this directly, stating, "Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs" (Boxer).
5. "Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs."

See the Appendix, Results for the “Check Your Understanding” Activities, for answers.

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9.1: Organizing Your Ideas and Looking for Connections



"No one is perfect" by becca.peterson26 is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0

Once you've gotten familiar with your assignment, considered your audience, and completed some pre-writing work, it's probably a good time to start creating a draft. There is a lot of pre-drafting work that can be useful for building and connecting ideas, but eventually it becomes important to flesh those ideas out into paragraphs and see how they work together as a more complete piece of writing.

. . . . . .

Once you have generated a good range of ideas, your next step will be to look through the ideas you've come up with. Which ones are most interesting to you to research and write about? You will, ideally, find several topics in your idea generation process that are interesting to you and robust enough that you will be able to clearly support them (and potentially also locate strong sources to help you do that).

For more discussion about how to get started see "Strategies for Getting Started" in the section titled "Prewriting—Generating Ideas."

So, how do you figure out which, out of all these good ideas you've come up with, is THE idea you want to work with?

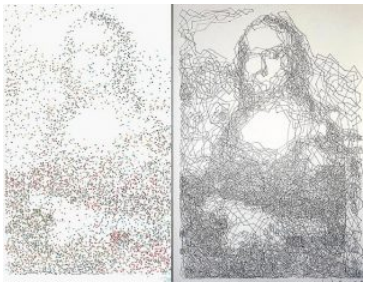
Start by Reviewing the Assignment

What kind of writing is the assignment asking you to do? Is this a review? A summary? An argumentative piece?

Will you need to do research and cite sources? If this is the case, you can probably set aside ideas that will be difficult to do research for, such as a story about a personal experience. These might be better suited to a different assignment.

- Is there a specific length requirement? You will want to look through your ideas to make sure you're focusing on ones that you will be able to have an in-depth and well-supported conversation about in this amount of space. If the assignment length is short, you won't have space to clarify a complex relationship between two ideas, and if the assignment is a longer one, you will need a topic that allows for that length of conversation without repeating yourself or focusing on just one support.
- How much time do you have? If the assignment is due soon, you may want to work with a topic you already know something about, rather than try to learn a new-to-you set of ideas from scratch in a hurry.
- Make sure any ideas you are considering focusing on for this work match the goals of the assignment.

Looking for Connections



Mona Lisa Connect the Dots by Thomas Pravitte, photo by James Robert Smith is licensed under CC NC-SA 2.0

Once you have narrowed your ideas to ones that fit the assignment parameters, look for connections between the remaining ideas. Does one support another? Are a few of them different ways of looking at the same thing? Can two combine to make a stronger, more complete topic? Does one spark your interest in a way the others don't?

If you complete these steps and find you have no topics left that have passed these tests, you will want to generate new ideas, maybe with a different generation method. If you want to look at or review some ways to do this, revisit from the “Strategies for Getting Started” section (in the “Prewriting” portion of this text). Now that you know what kinds of tests those ideas will be put to, it will likely be easier to generate ideas that will make it all the way through this process!

If you are still looking at several potential topics after this process, pick just one of them, or one tightly-connected group of them, to work with for this project.

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9.2: Finding the Thesis

You have plucked one idea (or closely related group of ideas) out of all of your possible ideas to focus on. Congratulations! Now what? Well, now you might write about that topic to explore what you want to say about it. Or, you might already have some idea about what point you want to make about it. If you are in the latter position, you may want to develop a working thesis to guide your drafting process.

What Is a Working Thesis?

A thesis is the controlling idea of a text (often an arguable idea—you will learn more about this in a bit). Depending on the type of text you are creating, all of the discussion in that text will serve to develop, explore multiple angles of, and/or support that thesis.

But how can we know, before getting any of the paper written, exactly what thesis the sources we find and the conversations we have will support? Often, we can't. The closest we can get in these cases is a working thesis, which is a best guess at what the thesis is likely to be based on the information we are working with at this time. The main idea of it may not change, but the specifics are probably going to be tweaked a bit as you complete a draft and do research.

So, let's look at one of the examples from "Strategies for Getting Started" from the "Prewriting—Generating Ideas" section of this book: the cluster about the broad central idea of danger. If the main idea is "danger," maybe the conversation you decide you want to have about it after clustering is that sometimes people step into danger intentionally in order to prove ourselves in some way. Next, you might make a list of possible thesis statements. For the sake of example, let's say this is for an assignment in response to the film *The Hunger Games*. Some thesis statements that fit this situation might look like this:

- Ultimately, *The Hunger Games* is a film about facing fears.
- In the 2012 film *The Hunger Games*, the main character's fear of losing her sister drives her to face a different set of dangers.
- Katniss Everdeen, the heroine of *The Hunger Games*, creates as much danger for herself as she faces from others over the course of the film.

If you were writing a summary, the first example in that list might be a good thesis to work with. If you were writing a review, the second one might be the better option. Let's say, though, that you've been assigned to write a more traditional college essay, something a little more focused on analysis. In that case, the final example in this list looks like a good working thesis. It might not be quite the same as the thesis you end up with in later drafts, but it looks like a strong idea to focus your ideas around while you're first getting them on the page.

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9.3: Writing a First Draft



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Now that you have a topic and/or a working thesis, you have several options for how to begin writing a more complete draft.

Just write. You already have at least one focusing idea. Start there. What do you want to say about it? What connections can you make with it? If you have a working thesis, what points might you make that support that thesis?

Make an outline. Write your topic or thesis down and then jot down what points you might make that will flesh out that topic or support that thesis. These don't have to be detailed. In fact, they don't even have to be complete sentences (yet)!

Begin with research. If this is an assignment that asks you to do research to support your points or to learn more about your topic, doing that research is an important early step (see the section on "Finding Quality Texts" in the "Information Literacy" section). This might include a range of things, such as conducting an interview, creating and administering a survey, or locating articles on the Internet and in library databases.

Research is a great early step because learning what information is available from credible sources about your topic can sometimes lead to shifting your thesis. Saving the research for a later step in the drafting process can mean making this change after already committing sometimes significant amounts of work to a thesis that existing credible research doesn't support. Research is also useful because learning what information is available about your topic can help you flesh out what you might want to say about it.

Essay Structure

You might already be familiar with the five-paragraph essay structure, in which you spend the first paragraph introducing your topic, culminating in a thesis that has three distinct parts. That introduction paragraph is followed by three body paragraphs, each one of those going into some detail about one of the parts of the thesis. Finally, the conclusion paragraph summarizes the main ideas discussed in the essay and states the thesis (or a slightly re-worded version of the thesis) again.

This structure is commonly taught in high schools, and it has some pros and some cons.

Pros

- It helps get your thoughts organized.
- It is a good introduction to a simple way of structuring an essay that lets students focus on content rather than wrestling with a more complex structure.
- It familiarizes students with the general shape and components of many essays—a broader introductory conversation giving readers context for this discussion, followed by a more detailed supporting discussion in the body of the essay, and ending with a sense of wrapping up the discussion and refocusing on the main idea.
- It is an effective structure for in-class essays or timed written exams.

Cons

- It can be formulaic—essays structured this way sound a lot alike.
- It isn't very flexible—often, topics don't lend themselves easily to this structure.
- It doesn't encourage research and discussion at the depth college-level work tends to ask for. Quite often, a paragraph is simply not enough space to have a conversation on paper that is thorough enough to support a stance presented in your thesis.

So, if the five-paragraph essay isn't the golden ticket in college work, what is?

That is a trickier question! There isn't really one prescribed structure that written college-level work adheres to—audience, purpose, length, and other considerations all help dictate what that structure will be for any given piece of writing you are doing. Instead, this text offers you some guidelines and best practices.

Things to Keep in Mind about Structure in College-Level Writing

Avoid the Three-Point Structure

Aim for a thesis that addresses a single issue rather than the three-point structure. Take a look at our example from the previous section, "Finding the Thesis":

"Katniss Everdeen, the heroine of The Hunger Games, creates as much danger for herself as she faces from others over the course of the film."

This thesis allows you to cover your single, narrow topic in greater depth, so you can examine multiple sides of a single angle of the topic rather than having to quickly and briefly address a broader main idea.

There's No "Right" Number of Supporting Points

There is no prescribed number of supporting points. You don't have to have three! Maybe you have two in great depth, or maybe four that explore that one element from the most salient angles. Depending on the length of your paper, you may even have more than that.

There's More than One Good Spot for a Thesis

Depending on the goals of the assignment, your thesis may no longer sit at the end of the first paragraph, so let's discuss a few places it can commonly be found in college writing.

It may end up at the end of your introductory information—once you've introduced your topic, given readers some reasonable context around it, and narrowed your focus to one area of that topic. This might put your thesis in the predictable end-of-the-first-paragraph spot, but it might also put that thesis several paragraphs into the paper

Some college work, particularly work that asks you to consider multiple sides of an issue fully, lends itself well to an end-of-paper thesis (sometimes called a "delayed thesis"). This thesis often appears a paragraph or so before the conclusion, which allows you to have a thorough discussion about multiple sides of a question and let that discussion guide you to your stance rather than having to spend the paper defending a stance you've already stated.

These are some common places you may find your thesis landing in your paper, but a thesis truly can be anywhere in a text.

Writing Beginnings

Beginnings have a few jobs. These will depend somewhat on the purpose of the writing, but here are some of the things the first couple of paragraphs do for your text:

- They establish the tone and primary audience of your text—is it casual? Academic? Geared toward a professional audience already versed in the topic? An interested audience that doesn't know much about this topic yet?
- They introduce your audience to your topic.
- They give you an opportunity to provide context around that topic—what current conversations are happening around it? Why is it important? If it's a topic your audience isn't likely to know much about, you may find you need to define what the topic itself is.
- They let you show your audience what piece of that bigger topic you are going to be working with in this text and how you will be working with it.
- They might introduce a narrative, if appropriate, or a related story that provides an example of the topic being discussed.

Take a look at the thesis about Katniss once more. There are a number of discussions that you could have about this film, and almost as many that you could have about this film and its intersections with the concept of danger (such as corruption in government, the hazards of power, risks of love or other personal attachments, etc.). Your introduction moving toward this thesis will shift our attention to the prevalence of self-imposed danger in this film, which will narrow your reader's focus in a way that prepares us for your thesis.

The most important thing at this point in the drafting process is to just get started, but when you're ready, if you want to learn more about formulas and methods for writing introductions, see "Writing Introductions," presented later in this section of the text.

Writing Middles

Middles tend to have a clearer job—they provide the meat of the discussion! Here are some ways that might happen:

- If you state a thesis early in the paper, the middle of the paper will likely provide support for that thesis.
- The middle might explore multiple sides of an issue.
- It might look at opposing views—ones other than the one you are supporting—and discuss why those don't address the issue as well as the view you are supporting does.

Let's think about the "multiple sides of the issue" approach to building support with our *Hunger Games* example. Perhaps Katniss may not see a particular dangerous situation she ends up in as being one she's created, but another character or the viewers may disagree. It might be worth exploring both versions of this specific danger to give the most complete, balanced discussion to support your thesis.

Writing Endings

Endings, like beginnings, tend to have more than one job. Here are some things they often need to do for a text to feel complete:

- Reconnect to the main idea/thesis. However, note that this is different than a simple copy/paste of the thesis from earlier in the text. We've likely had a whole conversation in the text since we first encountered that thesis. Simply repeating it, or even replacing a few key words with synonyms, doesn't acknowledge that bigger conversation. Instead, try pointing us back to the main idea in a new way.
- Tie up loose ends. If you opened the text with the beginning of a story to demonstrate how the topic applies to average daily life, the end of your text is a good time to share the end of that story with readers. If several ideas in the text tie together in a relevant way that didn't fit neatly into the original discussion of those ideas, the end may be the place to do that.
- Keep the focus clear—this is your last chance to leave an impression on the reader. What do you want them to leave this text thinking about? What action do you want them to take? It's often a good idea to be direct about this in the ending paragraph(s).

How might we reconnect with the main idea in our *Hunger Games* example? We might say something like, "In many ways, Katniss Everdeen is her own greatest obstacle to the safe and peaceful life she seems to wish for." It echoes, strongly, the original thesis, but also takes into account the more robust exploration that has happened in the middle parts of the paper.

As mentioned about writing introductions above, the most important thing at this point in the drafting process is to just get started (or in this case, to get started concluding), but when you're ready, if you want to learn more about formulas and methods for writing conclusions, see "Writing Conclusions," presented later in this section of the text.

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9.4: Writing Paragraphs

How to develop and organize paragraphs is a problem that plagues many beginning college writers. How do you start a paragraph? How can you help your reader understand the main idea? How do you know when you've included enough details? How do you conclude? You might also wonder when you need to break a paragraph and start a new one or how help your reader transition from one idea to the next. (For more on methods of development, see "Patterns of Organization and Methods of Development," later in this "Drafting" section of this text.).

What Is a Paragraph?

Let's begin by defining this concept of the paragraph. A paragraph is a group of sentences that present, develop, and support a single idea. That's it. There's no prescribed length or number of sentences. Paragraphs rarely stand alone, so most often the main topic of the paragraph serves the main concept or purpose of a larger whole; for example, the main idea of a paragraph in an essay should serve to develop and support the thesis of the essay. (For more on thesis statements, see "Finding the Thesis" earlier in this "Drafting" section of this text.)

Similarly, the main idea of a paragraph in a letter serves the overall purpose of the letter, whether that purpose is to thank your Aunt Martha for the thoughtful birthday sweater, or whether the purpose is to inform a local business that you're dissatisfied with the quality of a product or service that you purchased.

Topic Sentences

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



Think about some places where you might commonly find general topics presented with more focus, perhaps in news stories, textbooks, or speeches. The topic of a news story might be a deadly forest fire that's burning out of control, while the focus of the topic might be about careless humans. The topic of a chapter from a medical text might be phlebotomy (the practice of drawing blood from a patient), while the focus of a section of that chapter might be about safe disposal of used needles. Maybe the topic of a persuasive speech is organic produce, while the focus of the speech is about the importance of supporting local organic farms.

Most topics are expansive, so they require more focus—whether in a thesis statement or a topic sentence—to provide a narrower view of the broader subject. This narrower and more focused view also often seeks to persuade the reader to see things from the writer's perspective.

Side note. While we're on the subject of speech class, let's talk about how the presentation of topics in an academic essay differs from the presentation of topics in a speech. Beginning speech writers often use obvious verbal signposts to announce main ideas, transitional moments, or concluding thoughts.

For example, it would not be uncommon for a student in a college speech class, while delivering a speech, to say, "First, I will explain . . ." or "The first topic I will cover . . ." or "Next, I will tell you about . . ." or "In conclusion, as I have demonstrated . . . ." And while these methods for announcing a topic may be common and accepted practices in some college speech classes, they do not suit the expectations of your audience for an academic essay. With an oral presentation, the audience can't see how the speech will unfold, but with written text, readers can see the size and shape of the document that they're reading, so they don't need as much help navigating.

So how can you correct this common problem? It's quite simple actually. Just remove the verbal signpost that announces your position, remove the first person "I," point of view and simply state the position or topic (see the "Point of View" section in the "Writing about Texts" portion of this text). Here's an example:

Speech-like announcement of a topic: First, I will explain that while it's a common belief that use of cell phones causes lower levels of concentration and focus, cell phone use does have a place in the classroom and smart phones should be considered a valuable educational tool.

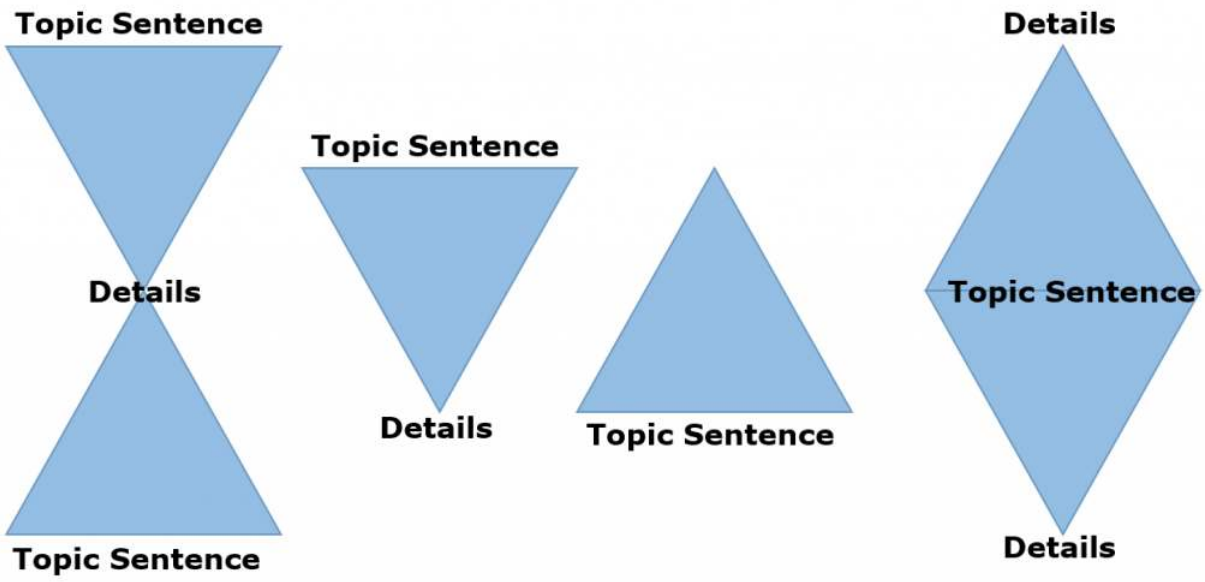
Improved presentation of a topic: While it's a common belief that the use of cell phones causes lower levels of concentration and focus, cell phone use does have a place in the classroom, and smart phones should be considered a valuable educational tool.

Placement of Topic Sentences

What if I told you that the topic sentence doesn't necessarily need to be at the beginning? This might be contrary to what you've learned in previous English or writing classes, and that's okay. Certainly, placing topic sentences at or near the beginning of paragraphs is a fine strategy, especially for beginning writers. If you announce a topic clearly and early on in a paragraph, your readers are likely to grasp your idea and to make the connections that you want them to make.

Now that you're writing for a more sophisticated academic audience though—that is an audience of college-educated readers—you can use more sophisticated organizational strategies to build and reveal ideas in your writing. One way to think about a topic sentence, is that it presents the broadest view of what you want your readers to understand. This is to say that you're providing a broad statement that either announces or brings into focus the purpose or the meaning for the details of the paragraph. And if you think of the topic sentence as the broadest view, then you can think about how every supporting detail brings a narrower—or more specific—view of the same topic.

With this in mind, take some time to contemplate the diagrams in the figure below. The widest point of each diagram (the bases of the triangles) represents the topic sentence of the paragraph. As details are presented, the topic becomes narrower and more focused. The topic can precede the details, it can follow them, it can both precede and follow them, or the details can surround the topic. There are surely more alternatives than those that are presented here, but this gives you an idea of some of the possible paragraph structures and possible placements for the topic sentence of a paragraph.



Consider some of the following examples of different topic sentence placements in a paragraph from a review essay of the beloved children's book, *The Cat in the Hat*, by Dr. Seuss. Paragraph structures are labeled according to the diagrams presented above, and topic sentences are identified by red text.

Topic Sentence-Details-Topic Sentence

A good children's book requires an exciting plot and a problem with which children can sympathize. In *The Cat in the Hat* there is plenty of action, depicted in the wild antics of the cat, and later in the amazing but dangerous and messy tricks of Thing 1 and Thing 2. All this excitement and action naturally draws children into the story and keeps the plot moving forward at a pace that maintains their interest. There is also tension to be resolved. The fish senses danger and constantly warns the children not to participate in the cat's perilous stunts. And later, as the mother's return becomes more imminent, the children begin to heed the fish's warning and finally wish to contain the chaos and clean up the mess, but how? While this plot is fantastic enough to fuel any child's imagination, it also contains a problem with which any child can relate: a mess and the threat of a parent's disapproval. **The careful balance of action, tension, and relatability is what makes this book an enduring childhood favorite**.

Topic Sentence-Details

The careful balance of action, tension, and relatability is what makes Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat* an enduring childhood favorite. In *The Cat in the Hat* there is plenty of action, depicted in the wild antics of the cat, and later in the amazing but dangerous and messy tricks of Thing 1 and Thing 2. All this excitement and action naturally draws children into the story and keeps the plot moving forward at a pace that maintains their interest. There is also tension to be resolved. The fish senses danger and constantly warns the children not to participate in the cat's perilous stunts. And later, as the mother's return becomes more imminent, the children begin to heed the fish's warning and finally wish to contain the chaos and clean up the mess, but how? While this plot is fantastic enough to fuel any child's imagination, it also contains a problem with which any child can relate: a mess and the threat of a parent's disapproval.

*Note: you can relocate the topic sentence to the end here, and you'll have an example of the **Details-Topic Sentence** method of organizing the paragraph.*

Details-Topic Sentence-Details

In *The Cat in the Hat* there is plenty of action, depicted in the wild antics of the cat, and later in the amazing but dangerous and messy tricks of Thing 1 and Thing 2. All this excitement and action naturally draws children into the story and keeps the plot moving forward at a pace that maintains their interest. **The careful balance of action, tension, and relatability is what makes Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat* an enduring childhood favorite**. There is definitely tension to be resolved here. The fish senses danger and constantly warns the children not to participate in the cat's perilous stunts. And later, as the mother's return becomes more imminent, the children begin to heed the fish's warning and finally wish to contain the chaos and clean up the mess, but how?

While this plot is fantastic enough to fuel any child's imagination, it also contains a problem with which any child can relate: a mess and the threat of a parent's disapproval.

Implied Topic Sentences

Now that you're getting used to the idea that the topic sentence doesn't necessarily need to be placed at the beginning of the paragraph, what if I told you that, sometimes, the topic sentence doesn't need to be stated at all? It's true! Eliminating the topic sentence isn't always the best strategy for beginning writers, but it can be effective, and it's a pretty common strategy among professional writers. It's also worthwhile to note that many instructors will prefer an explicit topic sentence over an implied one, just as many will prefer an explicit thesis over an implied one. When in doubt, ask your instructors about their preferences in areas such as these.

One area where you're likely to find implied topic sentences is in narrative essays. In narratives, as in novels or other works of creative writing, readers often prefer to glean the meaning from the text rather than to have it thrust upon them. Writers also often prefer to imply themes and ideas rather than spelling it out for their readers. There are also times when your main idea will be obvious enough without having to come out and state your topic sentence. If you're not sure about whether or not an implied topic is working in a paragraph, write an explicit topic sentence for the paragraph. Read the paragraph with and without your new explicit topic. Does addition of the explicit topic improve the clarity of the paragraph or essay? Share the essay with a couple of friends or classmates and get some second opinions.

Consider the following paragraph from an essay titled "The Bothersome Beauty of Pigeons," by author and Boise State writing professor, Bruce Ballenger. It's important to note that this is a personal narrative essay rather than a more traditional academic essay, but it the paragraph provides a good example of an implied topic. In this essay Ballenger takes the time to consider the beauty of pigeons, a bird that's usually thought of as nothing more than a nuisance. Just prior to this paragraph, Ballenger talks about how he used a fake owl to scare away pigeons on his property. He goes on to explain

My pigeons moved next door where an elderly couple feed them bird seed and have the time and willingness to clean up after their new charges; so it seems, in this case, things have worked out for everyone. But the large flocks still haunt the piazzas in Florence and Venice, the squares in London, and similar places in nearly every city across the globe. Despite their ability to distinguish between a Van Gogh and a Chagall, pigeons still deposit droppings that deface the great marble statues and facades–the works of art and architecture that are part of our human heritage–and yet people still buy bags of seed for about a dollar and pose for photographs, drenched in doves. Meanwhile, officials in these cities continue, sometimes quietly, to wage war against the birds ("Introduction").

Here, Ballenger seems to be saying that in spite of the attempts of so many to rid themselves of the pigeons, others are still drawn to them and will feed them and encourage them to come back. His main idea seems to be that the battle against pigeons is a losing proposition, but he doesn't come out and say so. His message in this paragraph is implied. Do you think this paragraph would be improved with an explicit topic sentence? As you write and revise your own paragraphs, these will be important questions for you to consider about your own writing.

Characteristics of a Good Topic Sentence

If a reader or teacher comments that your paragraph lacks unity, you probably need a better topic sentence (or maybe you don't have one yet). So, how can you spot a good topic sentence when you've written one? A good topic sentence might meet the following criteria:

- Signals the topic and also the more focused ideas of the paragraph
- Presents an idea or ideas that are clear and easy to understand
- Provides unity to the paragraph (so it's clear how all supporting ideas relate)
- Omits supporting details
- Engages the reader

There's no right order in the writing process for identifying or writing the topic sentence of a paragraph. Some writers begin drafting a paragraph with a main idea already in mind and then decide how to support it. Others begin writing about details, examples, or quotations from sources that they feel somehow relate to what they want to say, writing for a while before deciding what the main idea is. Most writers rely on a variety of strategies that they have developed through trial and error. So don't let the lack of a main idea hold you back from getting out what you want to say. Write for a while, and a main idea will surely emerge.

Exercises

Here are some exercises to help you practice identifying and developing topics and topic sentences.

Identify the Topic and Focus

Choose a piece of writing, perhaps an essay or some news articles provided by your instructor, and for each paragraph identify (1) the topic and (2) the more focused idea. Remember, the topic sentence applies more focus to the broader topic to help narrow the scope of the paragraph. For example, the topic of a paragraph might be school lunches. The more focused idea of that same paragraph might be the idea of having students plant school gardens as a way to help incorporate more fresh produce in the menu.

Ask Readers to Find the Topic Sentences

Ask someone to read your essay and for each supporting paragraph, ask your reader to underline the most likely topic sentence. If your reader can't find a topic sentence, ask him or her to write a topic sentence for that paragraph.

Ask a Readers to Share Their Expectations

Provide a reader with a list of your topic sentences, without the paragraphs that they belong to. Ask the reader what he or she thinks each paragraph is about and what kind of supporting details or discussion he or she would expect to see in the paragraph.

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9.5: The Paragraph Body: Supporting Your Ideas

Whether the drafting of a paragraph begins with a main idea or whether that idea surfaces in the revision process, once you have that main idea, you'll want to make sure that the idea has enough support. The job of the paragraph body is to develop and support the topic. Here's one way that you might think about it:

- **Topic sentence**: what is the main claim of your paragraph; what is the most important idea that you want your readers to take away from this paragraph?
- **Support in the form of evidence**: how can you prove that your claim or idea is true (or important, or noteworthy, or relevant)?
- **Support in the form of analysis or evaluation**: what discussion can you provide that helps your readers see the connection between the evidence and your claim?
- **Transition**: how can you help your readers move from the idea you're currently discussing to the next idea presented? (For more specific discussion about transitions, see the following section on "Developing Relationships between Ideas").

For more on methods of development that can help you to develop and organize your ideas within paragraphs, see "Patterns of Organization and Methods of Development" later in this section of this text.

Types of support might include

- Reasons.
- Facts.
- Statistics.
- Quotations.
- Examples.

Now that we have a good idea what it means to develop support for the main ideas of your paragraphs, let's talk about how to make sure that those supporting details are solid and convincing.

Good vs. Weak Support

What questions will your readers have? What will they need to know? What makes for good supporting details? Why might readers consider some evidence to be weak?

If you're already developing paragraphs, it's likely that you already have a plan for your essay, at least at the most basic level. You know what your topic is, you might have a working thesis, and you probably have at least a couple of supporting ideas in mind that will further develop and support your thesis.

So imagine you're developing a paragraph on one of these supporting ideas and you need to make sure that the support that you develop for this idea is solid. Considering some of the points about understanding and appealing to your audience (from the Audience and Purpose and the Prewriting sections of this text) can also be helpful in determining what your readers will consider good support and what they'll consider to be weak. Here are some tips on what to strive for and what to avoid when it comes to supporting details.

Good support	**Weak Support**
• Is relevant and focused (sticks to the point). • Is well developed. • Provides sufficient detail. • Is vivid and descriptive. • Is well organized. • Is coherent and consistent. • Highlights key terms and ideas.	• Lacks a clear connection to the point that it's meant to support. • Lacks development. • Lacks detail or gives too much detail. • Is vague and imprecise. • Lacks organization. • Seems disjointed (ideas don't clearly relate to each other). • Lacks emphasis of key terms and ideas.

Breaking, Combining, or Beginning New Paragraphs

Like sentence length, paragraph length varies. There is no single ideal length for "the perfect paragraph." There are some general guidelines, however. Some writing handbooks or resources suggest that a paragraph should be at least three or four sentences; others suggest that 100 to 200 words is a good target to shoot for. In academic writing, paragraphs tend to be longer, while in less formal or less complex writing, such as in a newspaper, paragraphs tend to be much shorter. Two-thirds to three-fourths of a page is

usually a good target length for paragraphs at your current level of college writing. If your readers can't see a paragraph break on the page, they might wonder if the paragraph is ever going to end or they might lose interest.

The most important thing to keep in mind here is that the amount of space needed to develop one idea will likely be different than the amount of space needed to develop another. So when is a paragraph complete? The answer is, when it's fully developed. The guidelines above for providing good support should help.

Some signals that it's time to end a paragraph and start a new one include that

- You're ready to begin developing a new idea.
- You want to emphasize a point by setting it apart.
- You're getting ready to continue discussing the same idea but in a different way (e.g. shifting from comparison to contrast).
- You notice that your current paragraph is getting too long (more than three-fourths of a page or so), and you think your writers will need a visual break.

Some signals that you may want to combine paragraphs include that

- You notice that some of your paragraphs appear to be short and choppy.
- You have multiple paragraphs on the same topic.
- You have undeveloped material that needs to be united under a clear topic.

Finally, paragraph number is a lot like paragraph length. You may have been asked in the past to write a five-paragraph essay. There's nothing inherently wrong with a five-paragraph essay, but just like sentence length and paragraph length, the number of paragraphs in an essay depends upon what's needed to get the job done. There's really no way to know that until you start writing. So try not to worry too much about the proper length and number of things. Just start writing and see where the essay and the paragraphs take you. There will be plenty of time to sort out the organization in the revision process. You're not trying to fit pegs into holes here. You're letting your ideas unfold. Give yourself—and them—the space to let that happen.

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9.6: Developing Relationships between Ideas



"Under Fremont Bridge in Portland" By Robert Ashworth is licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

So you have a main idea, and you have supporting ideas, but how can you be sure that your readers will understand the relationships between them? How are the ideas tied to each other? One way to emphasize these relationships is through the use of clear *transitions* between ideas. Like every other part of your essay, transitions have a job to do. They form logical connections between the ideas presented in an essay or paragraph, and they give readers clues that reveal how you want them to think about (process, organize, or use) the topics presented.

Why are Transitions Important?

Transitions signal the order of ideas, highlight relationships, unify concepts, and let readers know what's coming next or remind them about what's already been covered. When instructors or peers comment that your writing is choppy, abrupt, or needs to "flow better," those are some signals that you might need to work on building some better transitions into your writing. If a reader comments that she's not sure how something relates to your thesis or main idea, a transition is probably the right tool for the job.

When Is the Right Time to Build in Transitions?

There's no right answer to this question. Sometimes transitions occur spontaneously, but just as often (or maybe even more often) good transitions are developed in revision. While drafting, we often write what we think, sometimes without much reflection about how the ideas fit together or relate to one another. If your thought process jumps around a lot (and that's okay), it's more likely that you will need to pay careful attention to reorganization and to providing solid transitions as you revise.

When you're working on building transitions into an essay, consider the essay's overall organization. Consider using reverse outlining and other organizational strategies presented in this text to identify key ideas in your essay and to get a clearer look at how the ideas can be best organized. See the "Reverse Outlining" section in the "Revision" portion of this text, for a great strategy to help you assess what's going on in your essay and to help you see what topics and organization are developing. This can help you determine where transitions are needed.

Let's take some time to consider the importance of transitions at the sentence level and transitions between paragraphs.

Sentence-Level Transitions

Transitions between sentences often use "connecting words" to emphasize relationships between one sentence and another. A friend and coworker suggests the "something old something new" approach, meaning that the idea behind a transition is to introduce *something new* while connecting it to *something old* from an earlier point in the essay or paragraph. Here are some examples of ways that writers use connecting words (highlighted with red text and italicized) to show connections between ideas in adjacent sentences:

To Show Similarity

When I was growing up, my mother taught me to say "please" and "thank you" as one small way that I could show appreciation and respect for others. **In the same way**, I have tried to impress the importance of manners on my own children.

Other connecting words that show similarity include **also**, **similarly**, and **likewise**.

To Show Contrast

Some scientists take the existence of black holes for granted; **however**, in 2014, a physicist at the University of North Carolina claimed to have mathematically proven that they do not exist.

Other connecting words that show contrast include **in spite of**, **on the other hand**, **in contrast**, and **yet**.

To Exemplify

The cost of college tuition is higher than ever, so students are becoming increasingly motivated to keep costs as low as possible. **For example**, a rising number of students are signing up to spend their first two years at a less costly community college before transferring to a more expensive four-year school to finish their degrees.

Other connecting words that show example include **for instance**, **specifically**, and **to illustrate**.

To Show Cause and Effect

Where previously painters had to grind and mix their own dry pigments with linseed oil inside their studios, in the 1840s, new innovations in pigments allowed paints to be premixed in tubes. **Consequently**, this new technology facilitated the practice of painting outdoors and was a crucial tool for impressionist painters, such as Monet, Cezanne, Renoir, and Cassatt.

Other connecting words that show cause and effect include **therefore**, **so**, and **thus**.

To Show Additional Support

When choosing a good trail bike, experts recommend 120–140 millimeters of suspension travel; that's the amount that the frame or fork is able to flex or compress. **Additionally**, they recommend a 67–69 degree head-tube angle, as a steeper head-tube angle allows for faster turning and climbing.

Other connecting words that show additional support include **also**, **besides, equally important**, and **in addition**.

A Word of Caution

Single-word or short-phrase transitions can be helpful to signal a shift in ideas within a paragraph, rather than between paragraphs (see the discussion below about transitions between paragraphs). But it's also important to understand that these types of transitions shouldn't be frequent within a paragraph. As with anything else that happens in your writing, they should be used when they feel natural and feel like the right choice. Here are some examples to help you see the difference between transitions that feel like they occur naturally and transitions that seem forced and make the paragraph awkward to read:

Too Many Transitions: The Impressionist painters of the late 19th century are well known for their visible brush strokes, for their ability to convey a realistic sense of light, and for their everyday subjects portrayed in outdoor settings. **In spite of this fact**, many casual admirers of their work are unaware of the scientific innovations that made it possible this movement in art to take place. **Then**, In 1841, an American painter named John Rand invented the collapsible paint tube. **To illustrate the importance of this invention**, pigments previously had to be ground and mixed in a fairly complex process that made it difficult for artists to travel with them. **For example**, the mixtures were commonly stored in pieces of pig bladder to keep the paint from drying out. **In addition**, when working with their palettes, painters had to puncture the bladder, squeeze out some paint, and then mend the bladder again to keep the rest of the paint mixture from drying out. **Thus**, Rand's collapsible tube freed the painters from these cumbersome and messy processes, allowing artists to be more mobile and to paint in the open air.

Subtle Transitions that Aid Reader Understanding: The Impressionist painters of the late 19th century are well known for their visible brush strokes, for their ability to convey a realistic sense of light, for their everyday subjects portrayed in outdoor settings. **However**, many casual admirers of their work are unaware of the scientific innovations that made it possible for this movement in art to take place. In 1841, an American painter named John Rand invented the collapsible paint tube. **Before this invention**, pigments had to be ground and mixed in a fairly complex process that made it difficult for artists to travel with them. The mixtures were commonly stored in pieces of pig bladder to keep the paint from drying out. When working with their palettes, painters had to puncture the bladder, squeeze out some paint, and then mend the bladder again to keep the rest of the paint mixture from drying out. Rand's collapsible tube freed the painters from these cumbersome and messy processes, allowing artists to be more mobile and to paint in the open air.

Transitions between Paragraphs and Sections

It's important to consider how to emphasize the relationships not just between sentences but also between paragraphs in your essay. Here are a few strategies to help you show your readers how the main ideas of your paragraphs relate to each other and also to your thesis.

Use Signposts

Signposts are words or phrases that indicate where you are in the process of organizing an idea; for example, signposts might indicate that you are introducing a new concept, that you are summarizing an idea, or that you are concluding your thoughts. Some of the most common signposts include words and phrases like *first*, *then*, *next*, *finally, in sum*, and *in conclusion*. Be careful not to overuse these types of transitions in your writing. Your readers will quickly find them tiring or too obvious. Instead, think of more creative ways to let your readers know where they are situated within the ideas presented in your essay. You might say, "The first problem with this practice is…" Or you might say, "The next thing to consider is…" Or you might say, "Some final thoughts about this topic are…."

Use Forward-Looking Sentences at the End of Paragraphs

Sometimes, as you conclude a paragraph, you might want to give your readers a hint about what's coming next. For example, imagine that you're writing an essay about the benefits of trees to the environment and you've just wrapped up a paragraph about how trees absorb pollutants and provide oxygen. You might conclude with a forward-looking sentence like this: "Trees benefits to local air quality are important, but surely they have more to offer our communities than clean air." This might conclude a paragraph (or series of paragraphs) and then prepare your readers for additional paragraphs to come that cover the topics of trees' shade value and ability to slow water evaporation on hot summer days. This transitional strategy can be tricky to employ smoothly. Make sure that the conclusion of your paragraph doesn't sound like you're leaving your readers hanging with the introduction of a completely new or unrelated topic.

Use Backward-Looking Sentences at the Beginning of Paragraphs

Rather than concluding a paragraph by looking forward, you might instead begin a paragraph by looking back. Continuing with the example above of an essay about the value of trees, let's think about how we might begin a new paragraph or section by first taking a moment to look back. Maybe you just concluded a paragraph on the topic of trees' ability to decrease soil erosion and you're getting ready to talk about how they provide habitats for urban wildlife. Beginning the opening of a new paragraph or section of the essay with a backward-looking transition might look something like this: "While their benefits to soil and water conservation are great, the value that trees provide to our urban wildlife also cannot be overlooked."

Evaluate Transitions for Predictability or Conspicuousness

Finally, the most important thing about transitions is that you don't want them to become repetitive or too obvious. Reading your draft aloud is a great revision strategy for so many reasons, and revising your essay for transitions is no exception to this rule. If you read your essay aloud, you're likely to hear the areas that sound choppy or abrupt. This can help you make note of areas where transitions need to be added. Repetition is another problem that can be easier to spot if you read your essay aloud. If you notice yourself using the same transitions over and over again, take time to find some alternatives. And if the transitions frequently stand out as you read aloud, you may want to see if you can find some subtler strategies.

? Exercise 9.6.1: Try Out Some New Transition Strategies

Choose an essay or piece of writing, either that you're currently working on, or that you've written in the past. Identify your major topics or main ideas. Then, using this chapter, develop at least three examples of sentence-level transitions and at least two examples of paragraph-level transitions. Share and discuss with your classmates in small groups, and choose one example of each type from your group to share with the whole class. If you like the results, you might use them to revise your writing. If not, try some other strategies.

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9.7: Patterns of Organization and Methods of Development

Patterns of organization can help your readers follow the ideas within your essay and your paragraphs, but they can also work as methods of development to help you recognize and further develop ideas and relationships in your writing. Here are some strategies that can help you with both organization and development in your essays.

Major Patterns of Organization

Read the following sentences:

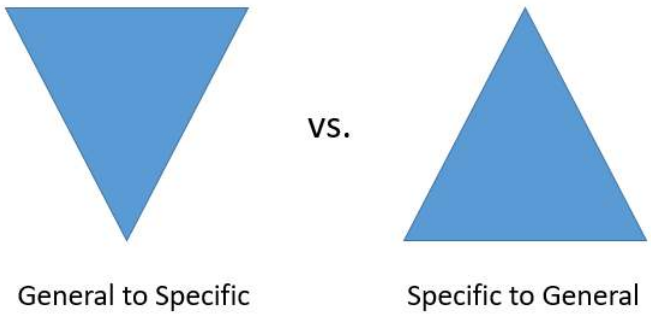
1. Now take the pie out of the oven and let it cool on the stovetop.
2. Mix the dry ingredients with the liquid ingredients.
3. Set the pie crust aside while you make the filling.

How did it feel to read the above list? A bit confusing, I would guess. That's because the steps for making a pie were not well organized, and the steps don't include enough detail for us to know exactly what we should do. (Like what are the dry and liquid ingredients?) We all know that starting instructions from the beginning and giving each detailed step in the order it should happen is vital to having a good outcome, in this case a yummy pie! But it's not always so simple to know how to organize or develop ideas, and sometimes there's more than one way, which complicates things even further.

First, let's take a look at a couple of ways to think about organization.

General to Specific or Specific to General

It might be useful to think about organizing your topic like a triangle:



The first triangle represents starting with the most general, big picture information first, moving then to more detailed and often more personal information later in the paper. The second triangle represents an organizational structure that starts with the specific, small scale information first and then moves to the more global, big picture stuff.

For example, if your topic is air pollution in Portland, Oregon, an essay that uses the general-to-specific organizational structure might begin this way:

> Many people consider Portland, Oregon, to be an environmentally friendly, pollution-free place to live. They would be shocked to know how many pollutants are in the air causing a multitude of health problems in Portland's citizens.

An essay that uses the specific-to-general structure might start like this:

> When Nancy moved to Portland, Oregon, with her husband and two kids, she expected to find a clean, pollution-free city. She was shocked and angered when her daughter was diagnosed with asthma caused by air pollution.

What's the difference between these two introductions? And how might they appeal to the intended audience for this essay (Portland voters) in different ways? The first introduction is looking at the big picture of the problem and mentions pollution's impact on all citizens in Portland, while the second introduction focuses on one specific family. The first helps readers see how vast the problem really is, and the second helps connect readers to a real family, making an emotional appeal from the very beginning. Neither introduction is necessarily better. You'll choose one over the other based on the kind of tone you'd like to create and how you'd like to affect your audience. It's completely up to you to make this decision.

Does the Triangle Mean the Essay Keeps Getting More Specific or More Broad until the Very End?

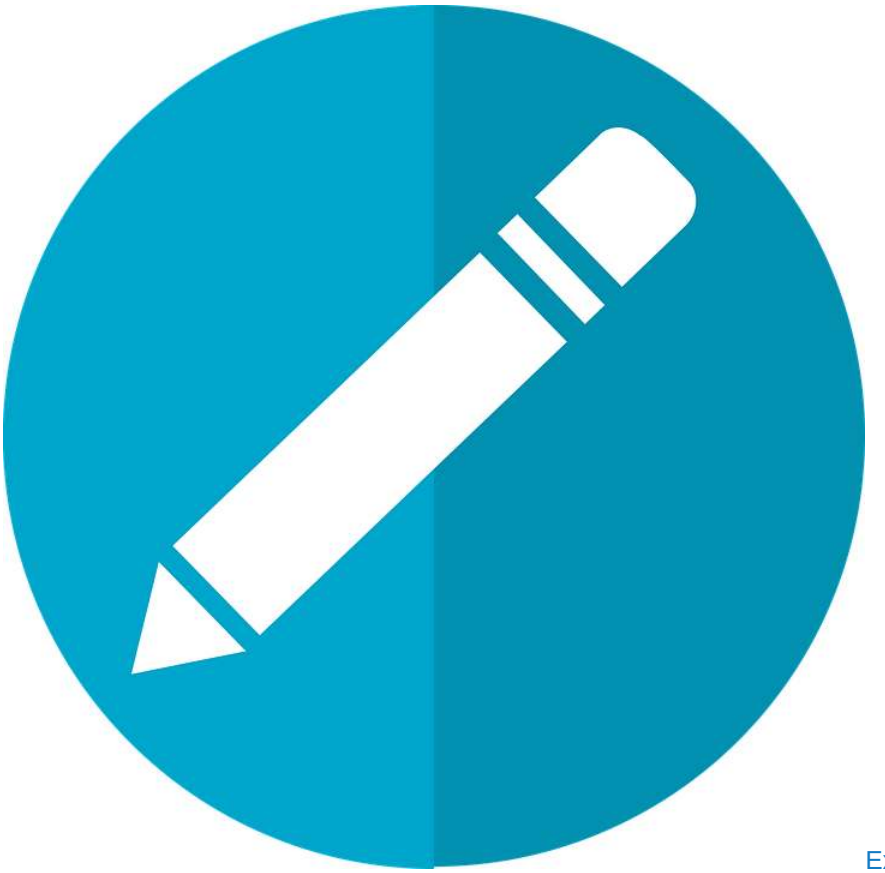
The triangle is kind of a general guide, meaning you're allowed to move around within it all you want. For example, it's possible that each of your paragraphs will be its own triangle, starting with the general or specific and moving out or in. However, if you begin very broadly, it might be effective to end your essay in a more specific, personal way. And if you begin with a personal story, consider ending your essay by touching on the global impact and importance of your topic.

Are There Other Ways to Think about Organizing My Ideas?

Yes! Rather than thinking about which of your ideas are most specific or personal or which are more broad or universal, you might consider one of the following ways of organizing your ideas:

- Most important information first (consider what you want readers to focus on first)
- Chronological order (the order in time that events take place)
- Compare and contrast (ideas are organized together because of their relationship to each other)

The section on Methods of Development, below, offers more detail about some of these organizational patterns, along with some others.



Exercise

Choose one of the following topics, and practice writing a few opening sentences like we did above, once using the general-to-specific format and once using the specific-to-general. Which do you like better? What audience would be attracted to which one? Share with peers to see how others tackled this challenge. How would you rewrite their sentences? Why? Discuss your changes and listen to how your peers have revised your sentences. Taking in other people's ideas will help you see new ways to approach your own writing and thinking.

Topics:

1. Facing fears
2. Safety in sports
3. Community policing
4. Educating prisoners

5. Sex education
6. A book or movie that impacted you
7. One thing you would change about your community
8. Beauty standards
9. Toxic masculinity
10. How the media affects identity formation
11. Gender roles
12. Race in America
13. The value of art in society
14. Travel as part of a well-rounded education
15. Drugs and alcohol
16. Advice to new parents
17. Advice to teachers
18. The value of making mistakes
19. How you'd spend a million dollars
20. What a tough day at work taught you about yourself or others.

Methods of Development

The methods of development covered here are best used as ways to look at what's already happening in your draft and to consider how you might emphasize or expand on any existing patterns. You might already be familiar with some of these patterns because teachers will sometimes assign them as the purpose for writing an essay. For example, you might have been asked to write a cause-and-effect essay or a comparison-and-contrast essay.

It's important to emphasize here that patterns of organization or methods of developing content usually happen naturally as a consequence of the way the writer engages with and organizes information while writing. That is to say, most writers don't sit down and say, "I think I'll write a cause-and-effect essay today." Instead, a writer might be more likely to be interested in a topic, say, the state of drinking water in the local community, and as the writer begins to explore the topic, certain cause-and-effect relationships between environmental pollutants and the community water supply may begin to emerge.

So if these patterns just occur naturally in writing, what's the use in knowing about them? Well, sometimes you might be revising a draft and notice that some of your paragraphs are a bit underdeveloped. Maybe they lack a clear topic, or maybe they lack support. In either case, you can look to these common methods of development to find ways to sharpen those vague topics or to add support where needed. Do you have a clear cause statement somewhere but you haven't explored the effects? Are you lacking detail somewhere where a narrative story or historical chronology can help build reader interest and add support? Are you struggling to define an idea that might benefit from some comparison or contrast? Read on to consider some of the ways that these strategies can help you in revision. And if you want to learn more, check out what the *New York Times* has to say in their learning blog article, "Compare-Contrast, Cause-Effect, Problem Solution: Common 'Text Types' in The Times."

Cause and Effect (or Effect and Cause)

Do you see a potential cause-and-effect relationship developing in your draft? The cause-and-effect pattern may be used to identify one or more causes followed by one or more effects or results. Or you may reverse this sequence and describe effects first and then the cause or causes. For example, the causes of water pollution might be followed by its effects on both humans and animals. You may use obvious transitions to clarify cause and effect, such as "What are the results? Here are some of them…" or you might simply use the words *cause*, *effect*, and *result*, to cue the reader about your about the relationships that you're establishing.

Here's an example article from the New York times, "Rough Times Take Bloom Off a New Year's Rite, the Rose Parade," that explores the cause and effect relationship (from 2011) between Pasadena's budgetary challenges and the ability of their Rose Parade floats to deck themselves out in full bloom.

Problem-Solution

At some point does your essay explore a problem or suggest a solution? The problem-solution pattern is commonly used in identifying something that's wrong and in contemplating what might be done to remedy the situation. There are probably more ways to organize a problem-solution approach, but but here are three possibilities:

- Describe the problem, followed by the solution.

- Propose the solution first and then describe the problems that motivated it.
- Or a problem may be followed by several solutions, one of which is selected as the best.

When the solution is stated at the end of the paper, the pattern is sometimes called the delayed proposal. For a hostile audience, it may be effective to describe the problem, show why other solutions do not work, and finally suggest the favored solution. You can emphasize the words *problem* and *solution* to signal these sections of your paper for your reader.

Here's an example article from the New York times, "Monks Embrace Web to Reach Recruits," that highlights an unexpected approach by a group of Benedictine monks in Rhode Island; they've turned to social media to grow their dwindling membership. Monks on Facebook? Who knew?

Chronology or Narrative

Do you need to develop support for a topic where telling a story can illustrate some important concept for your readers? Material arranged chronologically is explained as it occurs in time. A chronological or narrative method of development might help you find a way to add both interest and content to your essay. Material arranged chronologically is explained as it occurs in time. This pattern may be used to establish what has happened. Chronology or narrative can be a great way to introduce your essay by providing a background or history behind your topic. Or you may want to tell a story to develop one or more points in the body of your essay. You can use transitional words like *then*, *next*, and *finally* to make the parts of the chronology clear.

Here's an example article from the Center for Media Literacy (originally published in the journal *Media & Values*): "From Savers to Spenders: How Children Became a Consumer Market." To encourage his readers to think about why and how children are being marketed to by advertisers, the author uses a historical chronology of how the spending habits of children changed over a number of decades.

Comparison and Contrast

Are you trying to define something? Do you need your readers to understand what something is and what it is not? The comparison-and-contrast method of development is particularly useful in extending a definition, or anywhere you need to show how a subject is like or unlike another subject. For example, the statement is often made that drug abuse is a medical problem instead of a criminal justice issue. An author might attempt to prove this point by comparing drug addiction to AIDS, cancer, or heart disease to redefine the term "addiction" as a medical problem. A statement in opposition to this idea could just as easily establish contrast by explaining all the ways that addiction is different from what we traditionally understand as an illness. In seeking to establish comparison or contrast in your writing, some words or terms that might be useful are *by contrast*, *in comparison*, *while*, *some*, and *others*.

Here's an example article from the New York times: "Who Wants to Shop in a Big Box Store, Anyway?" The author explores some interesting differences between the average American and average Indian consumer to contemplate the potential success of big box stores in India and also to contemplate why these giant big box corporations, like Walmart or Target, might have to rethink their business model.

These four methods of development—cause and effect, problem-solution, chronology or narrative, and comparison and contrast—are just a few ways to organize and develop ideas and content in your essays. It's important to note that they should not be a starting point for writers who want to write something authentic—something that they care deeply about. Instead, they can be a great way to help you look for what's already happening with your topic or in a draft, to help you to write more, or to help you reorganize some parts of an essay that seem to lack connection or feel disjointed. Look for organizational patterns when you're reading work by professional writers. Notice where they combine strategies (e.g a problem-solution pattern that uses cause-and-effect organization, or a comparison-contrast pattern that uses narrative or chronology to develop similarities or differences). Pay attention to how different writers emphasize and develop their main ideas, and use what you find to inspire you in your own writing. Better yet, work on developing completely new patterns of your own.

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9.8: Writing Introductions



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"You don't get a second chance to make a first impression." This common axiom reminds us just how much weight people place on their first experiences, whether it be with a person, a road trip, or a piece of writing. Catching readers' attention may be the most important work you do when you write, because if you lose them in the introduction, you don't get a chance to share your message with them later.

What is the Purpose of an Introduction?

Introductions have two jobs:

- Catch readers' attention.
- Introduce the focus and purpose of your writing.

How do I accomplish these jobs without giving away all of my essay in the introduction? I mean, how do I know what will hook readers' attention without sharing all the cool details?

Great questions! You might start by using this simple formula and then choosing a method from the list below.

Formula

A good introduction = new information + ideas that everyone may not agree with. To put it another way, if your piece begins with an idea most people know and agree with, it's less likely to pull readers in. People are made curious by new ideas and opinions that have multiple perspectives or may be controversial.

Methods

The following are some methods and examples for introducing a topic and getting your reader's attention.

Method: Share an interesting, shocking, or little known fact or statistic about your topic. Starting your paper with a fact or statistic that gives your readers insight into your topic right away will peak their curiosity and make them want to know more. It will also help you establish a strong *ethos*, or credibility, from the very beginning.

> **Example**: According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 68% of prison inmates do not have a high school diploma.

Method: Tell an anecdote or story that will help readers connect with your topic on a personal level. Sharing a human interest story right away will help readers connect with your topic on a personal level and will help to illustrate way your topic matters.

> **Example**: Today, Jimmy Santiago Baca is a well known American poet, but when he was twenty he entered prison illiterate and had to teach himself to read over the five years he spent behind bars.

Method: Ask a question that gets readers curious about the answer. People tend to want to answer questions when they're presented with them. This provides you with an easy way to catch readers' attention because they'll keep reading to discover the answer to any questions you pose in the introduction. Just be sure to answer them at some point in your writing.

> **Example**: Can prisons rehabilitate prisoners so they're able to return to their communities, find jobs, and contribute in positive ways?



Exercise: Good or Bad Introduction?

One way to improve your introduction-writing skills is to look at different choices that other writers make when introducing a topic and to consider what catches your interest as a reader and what doesn't. Read the introductions below about teenagers and decision making. Which ones pull you in? Which ones are less interesting? What's the difference? Work with peers to decide.

1. Throughout history, teenagers have challenged the authority of adults. They do this because they want to be given more freedom and to be treated like adults themselves. This can cause real problems between teens and the adults in their lives.
2. Some days my sixteen-year-old niece, Rachael, does all of her homework, helps friends study after school, and practices her cello, and other days she forgets her books at school, lies about where she's going, and doesn't do her chores. This sporadic behavior seems like it comes out of nowhere, but it turns out teenage brains are different from adult brains, causing teens to sometimes not think about consequences before they act.
3. If teenage brains aren't fully formed, causing them to act before they think about the risks they're taking, should teens be restricted from some adult freedoms like driving, working, and socializing without adult supervision?
4. Teenagers are known to be less responsible than adults, so they should have at least some adult guidance to make sure they stay safe. Without adult supervision, teens will make poor decisions that could put them at unnecessary risk.
5. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the frontal cortex in the brain, where reasoning and thinking before acting occurs, is not fully formed in teenagers. However, the amygdala, "responsible for immediate reactions including fear and aggressive behavior," is fully formed early in life. This means teens aren't as good at considering the consequences of their behavior before they react, so the adults in their lives should limit the risks in their lives until they're better able to reason through them.



Exercise: Write an Introduction

Now that you've had an opportunity to think about some different approaches and techniques for writing introductions, let's practice. Find an entry in your journal or a draft of a piece of writing you're working on this term and use what you've learned in this section to write an attention-grabbing introduction to your piece.

If you don't currently have a piece to work with, you can write an introduction using one of the following scenarios. Read through the following list and choose one. One to three sentences is enough.

1. Persuade your local school board members that the elementary school should change the way it teaches sex education.
2. Persuade teens to travel to a foreign country before they graduate from college.
3. Give some tips to new parents that will help lower their stress and make their new baby feel safe and loved.
4. Inform young athletes who may want to play football of the possible risks and benefits.
5. Review a movie, book, product, or trip for someone thinking of making one of these purchases to help them decide that they should or shouldn't do it.

Share your introduction with your classmates and discuss what about it is effective and how it could be improved.

See the discussion about "Writing Beginnings" in the "Writing a First Draft" section in the "Drafting" portion of this text for more on writing introductions as part of your drafting process.

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9.9: Writing Conclusions

Studies have shown that the human brain is more likely to remember items at the beginnings and ends of lists, presentations, and other texts. When people recall the last thing they read or hear, that's called the "recency effect" because they're remembering the most recent information they've encountered ("Recency Effect"). This is why the last thing you write is so important. It's your final chance to make an impression on your readers.

What Is the Purpose of a Conclusion?

Conclusions have two jobs:

- Leave readers with something to think about.
- Clarify why your topic matters to them and the larger community (whether that be the class, their neighborhood or the whole wide world).

Sometimes the conclusion is called the "So what?" section of the text because it helps readers understand the significance of your subject.

What Techniques Keep Readers Thinking about the Topic at the End of a Piece of Writing?

Funny enough, some of the same methods that work for the introduction also work for the conclusion. However, the formula is a little different.

Formula

A good conclusion = a call to action and/or a connection between the topic and the reader. In other words, because you're trying to end your piece, you don't want to start making new claims or sharing new research. Instead, you'll want to help readers see how they relate to your subject matter. Sometimes this means suggesting that the reader do something specific. That's a call to action. You can also end by raising questions related to your topic or by making suggestions for how this topic may develop in the future. Leaving readers with interesting ideas to think about is key to a successful conclusion.

Methods

The following are some methods and examples for concluding an essay and giving your readers a sense of closure or an idea of what you would like them to think about or do next.

Method: Make a call to action. The goal of a call to action is to prompt readers to do something.

> **Example**: Citizens who agree that music education should be a part of all public schools in the United States can make a difference by writing their representatives, going to a school board meeting, and when a ballot initiative comes around, voting to fund music education.

Method: Ask a rhetorical question. A rhetorical question is meant to make people think, but not necessarily come to an answer. Often, the answer to rhetorical questions is clear right away, but the deeper significance needs to be pondered.

> **Example**: Should schools in the U.S. be concerned with the kind of emotional and cognitive development that music education prompts? If we're interested in educating the whole child, not just the most academic parts of the brain, then the answer is yes, and we have to reconsider our priorities when it comes to school funding.

Method: Share an anecdote or story that will keep the issue in the forefront of the readers' minds. An interesting snapshot of someone's life or story about an intriguing character will help humanize the topic and help the readers remember your message. If you used an anecdote or story in the introduction, this is an opportunity to reconnect with that at the end of your piece.

> **Example**: Lin-Manuel Miranda, the creator of the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton*, says that arts education saved his life. He went to an elementary school where the sixth grade put on a famous play every year—everything from *Fiddler on the Roof* to *The Wizard of Oz*—but by the time Miranda's class was in sixth grade, the teachers had run out of plays appropriate for children, so they had the sixth graders write their own musicals in addition to performing all the musicals from the previous years. That four-hour-long musical extravaganza was Miranda's first experience of writing and acting in his own production (Raskauskas). The opportunity that his teachers provided him turned into a lifelong passion. All students should have that same opportunity to connect with the arts in meaningful ways.

(For more of Miranda's story, see the WFMT article, "Arts Education Saved My Life.")

Method: Share a quote by an expert or historical figure. Choose a quote from someone who is well known in a relevant field and who has expertise on your topic. This will lend your conclusion credibility and leave readers with something powerful to consider.

> **Example**: As Oliver Sacks notes in his book *Musicophilia*, "Rhythm and its entrainment of movement (and often emotion), its power to 'move' people, in both senses of the word, may well have had a crucial cultural and economic function in human evolution, bringing people together, producing a sense of collectivity and community" (268). Our schools aim to foster that same sense of community, which is why music must be part of a well rounded education.



Exercise: Good or Bad Conclusion?

One way to improve your conclusion-writing skills is to look at different choices that other writers make when concluding a topic and to consider what feels satisfying or thought-provoking to you as a reader and what doesn't. Read the conclusions below about teenagers and decision making. Which ones pull you in? Which ones are less interesting? What's the difference? Work with peers to decide.

1. Should teens be given complete freedom? Probably not, but a measured level of responsibility helps kids of all ages learn to trust themselves to make good decisions. This is especially important for teens since they will be adults very soon.
2. Parents who want to teach their teenagers to be responsible decision makers can start by talking to their teens regularly about the kinds of decisions their teens are being faced with and allowing teens to make decisions about anything that won't put them in immediate danger. This may be difficult at first, but the reward will come when parents see their teens feeling more confident in the face of difficult decisions and more ready to face the adult world.
3. As stated above, research shows that the teenage brain isn't fully matured, so adults should consider this when deciding how much freedom to give them.
4. According to the AACAP, teens are more likely to make decisions based on emotions without thinking first. This means they're more likely to "engage in dangerous or risky behavior." Therefore, teens need to be protected until they're old enough to make thoughtful decisions.
5. Now that Rachael has been given the freedom to make some big decisions in her life, she's more willing to talk to her parents when she needs advice or isn't sure about something. Even though she sometimes makes mistakes, her parents trust that she will learn important lessons from those mistakes, and they help her feel supported when she experiences a failure. Raising a teenager isn't easy, but this family has found a method that's working for this particular teen.



Exercise: Write a Conclusion

Now that you've had an opportunity to think about some different approaches and techniques for writing conclusions, let's practice. Find an entry in your journal or a draft of a piece of writing you're working on this term and use what you've learned in this section to write a compelling conclusion to your piece.

If you don't currently have a piece to work with, you can write a conclusion using one of the scenarios below. Read through the following list and choose one. Then, practice writing a concluding statement or paragraph on the topic. One to three sentences is enough.

1. Persuade your local school board members that the elementary school should change the way it teaches sex education.
2. Persuade teens to travel to a foreign country before they graduate from college.
3. Give some tips to new parents that will help lower their stress and make their new baby feel safe and loved.
4. Inform young athletes who may want to play football of the possible risks and benefits.
5. Review a movie, book, product, or trip for someone thinking of making one of these purchases to help them decide that they should or shouldn't do it.

Share your conclusion with your classmates and discuss what about it is effective and how it could be improved.

See the discussion about "Writing Endings" in the "Writing a First Draft" section of the "Drafting" portion of this text for more on writing conclusions as part of your drafting process.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Using Sources Correctly

10.1: Crediting and Citing Your Sources
10.2: Citing or Identifying Images in Your Writing
10.3: Handling Titles
10.4: Proofreading Your Work with Sources
10.5: Using Citation Generators

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10.1: Crediting and Citing Your Sources



"Old library of Trinity College, Dublin" by Francesc González is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Now that you've just summarized or paraphrased or directly quoted a source, is there anything else you need to do with that source? Well, it turns out there is. There are some standard ways of using sources that let your readers know this material is from other texts rather than original ideas from your own brain. Following these guidelines also allows us, your readers, to locate those sources if we are interested in the topic and would like to know more about what they say.

. . . . . .

Giving credit to the sources you used creating a text is important (and useful!) for several reasons.

- It adds to your own credibility as an author by showing you have done appropriate research on your topic and approached your work ethically.
- It gives credit to the original author and their work for the ideas you found to be useful, and in giving them credit it helps you avoid unintentionally plagiarizing their work.
- It gives your readers additional resources (already curated by you in your research process!) that they can go to if they want to read further your topic.

What Does It Mean to Credit or Cite Your Sources?

For college-level work, this generally means two things: in-text or parenthetical citation and a "Works Cited" or "References" page. What these two things look like will be a little different for different types of classes (for example, it's likely your writing class will use MLA—Modern Language Association—format, while a psychology class is more likely to use APA—American Psychological Association—format). The specific details required and the order in which they appear changes a little between different formats, but practicing one of them will give you a general idea of what most of them are looking for. All of the information we are looking at here is specific to MLA, which is the format you will use for your writing classes (and some other humanities classes).

Citing: Identifying In-Text Sources

Once you have brought source material into your writing (via quotation, summary, or paraphrase), your next task is to cite or identify it. This is essential because giving credit to the creator of the source material helps you avoid plagiarism. Identifying your sources also helps your reader understand which written content is from a source and which represents your ideas.

When you cite or identify source materials, you make it absolutely clear that the material was taken from a source. Note that if you don't do that, your reader is left to assume the words are yours—and since that isn't true, you will have committed plagiarism.

In-Text Citation

Every time you use an idea or language from a source in your text (so every time you summarize, paraphrase, or directly quote material from a source), you will want to add an in-text citation. Sometimes you can accomplish this simply by mentioning the author or title of a source in the body of your writing, but other times you'll handle in-text citation differently, with a parenthetical citation. Parenthetical means that the citation appears in parentheses in the text of your essay.

A starting point for parenthetical citations is that they include the author's last name and the page number where the borrowed information came from. For example, let's say I'm using material from an article written by Lisa Smith. It's in a physical magazine and spans pages 38-42. If, on page 41, she says something like, "While most studies have shown that Expo dry erase markers have superior lasting power, erasability, and color saturation than other brands on the market, their higher cost is a concern for some consumers," I might incorporate that into a paper like this:

> By most measurable standards, Expo markers are clearly the favored option (Smith 41).

However, you don't always need both components (last name and page number) in the parenthetical citation. If I introduced the source material in the sentence above a little differently, introducing the author before delivering the material, I wouldn't need to repeat the author's name in that same sentence in the parenthetical citation. In that case, my sentence would look something like this: According to Lisa Smith, Expo markers are clearly the favored option by most measurable standards (41).

In this section, we'll discuss **three ways to cite or identify written source materials** in your own writing.

1. Introduce the Author and/or the Title of the Source

By introducing the author or the material, you make it clear to the reader that what you're talking about is from a source. Here's an example of a quotation that is identified by introducing the author and the title of source (which are highlighted):

> In the article, "Grooming Poodles for Fun and Profit," Jonas Fogbottom explains, "Poodle grooming is a labor of love. It takes years of practice to be good at it, but once learned, it's a fun and worthwhile career."

Here's an example of a paraphrase that is identified in the same way:

> In the article, "Grooming Poodles for Fun and Profit," Jonas Fogbottom says that although it takes a long time to become a skilled poodle groomer, it's well worth the effort and leads to a good career.

Note that, in the example above, (1) if there are no page numbers to cite and (2) if the name of the author is signaled in the phrase that introduces the bit of source material, then there is no need for the parenthetical citation. This is an example of a situation where mentioning the author by name is the only in-text citation you'll need. And sometimes, if the name of the author is unknown, then you might just mention the title of the article instead. It will be up to you, as a writer, to choose which method works best for your given situation.

The first time that you mention a source in your writing, you should always introduce the speaker and, if possible, the title of the source as well. Note that the speaker is the person responsible for stating the information that you're citing and that this is not always the author of the text. For example, an author of an article might quote someone else, and you might quote or paraphrase that person.

Use the speaker's full name (e.g. "According to Jonas Fogbottom . . .") the first time you introduce them; if you mention them again in the paper, use their last name only (e.g. "Fogbottom goes on to discuss . . .").

2. Use Linking or Attributive Language

Using linking language (sometimes called attributive language or signal phrases) simply means using words that show the reader you are still talking about a source that you just mentioned.

For example, you might use linking language that looks something like this:

- The author also explains . . .
- Fogbottom continues . . .
- The article goes on to say . . .
- The data set also demonstrates . . .

By using this kind of language, you make it clear to the reader that you're still talking about a source. And while you'll use this type of language throughout any researched essay whether you're also using parenthetical citations or not, as we mentioned above, sometimes this linking language will be all you need for in-text citation.

Let's look back at the last Fogbottom example from above, and imagine you wanted to add two more sentences from the same source. The linking language is highlighted:

> In the article, "Grooming Poodles for Fun and Profit," Jonas Fogbottom says that although it takes a long time to become a skilled poodle groomer, it's well worth the effort and leads to a good career. Fogbottom goes on to explain how one is trained in the art of dog and poodle grooming. The article also gives a set of resources for people who want to know more about a dog grooming career.

Using the linking language makes it absolutely clear to your reader that you are still talking about a source.

3. Use a Parenthetical Citation

A parenthetical citation is a citation enclosed within parentheses.

Pro Tip

Whatever comes first in the Works Cited citation is what will go into the parentheses in a parenthetical citation. Most often that item is an author's last name, but sometimes it's a title or abbreviated title of an article or other type of text. This is another good reason for starting by creating a Works Cited entry the moment you begin working with a source.

The classic parenthetical citation includes the author's name and, if there is one, a page number. To learn more about parenthetical citation and see some examples, see the Purdue OWL article on "MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics" (available from owl.english.purdue.edu).

Here's an **example**:

> (Fogbottom 16)

If there are **two authors**, list both (with a page number, if available):

> (Smith and Jones 24)

If there are **three or more authors**, list the first author only and add "et al."* (with a page number, if available):

> (Smith et al. 62)

**et al* means "and others." If a text or source has three or more authors, MLA style has us just list the first one with *et al*.

But my source doesn't have page numbers!

If you are using an electronic source or another kind of source with no page numbers, just leave the page number out:

> (Fogbottom)

If you're **quoting or paraphrasing someone who was cited by the author of one of your sources**, then that's handled a bit differently. For example, what if you quote Smith, but you found that quote in the article by Fogbottom. In this case, you should introduce the speaker (Smith) as described above, and then cite the source for the quote, like this:

> (qtd. in Fogbottom)

But my source doesn't have an author!

This happens sometimes. Many useful documents, like government publications, organizational reports, and surveys, don't list their authors. On the other hand, sometimes no clearly listed author can be a red flag that a source is not entirely trustworthy or is not researched well enough to be a reliable source for you.

If you encounter a source with no author, do look for other indicators that it is a good (or poor) source—who published it, does it have an appropriate list of references, is it current information, is it unbiased?

If you determine that this source is an appropriate source to use, then, when you create your in-text citation for it, you will simply use the title of the source (article, chapter, graph, film, etc.) in the place where you would have used the author's name. If the title is long, you should abbreviate by listing the first one or two words of it (with a page number, if available).

Let's imagine you're working with a newspaper article entitled, "What's New in Technology," enclosed in quotation marks to indicate that this is an article title, and with **no known author**. Here's what that would look in a parenthetical citation:

> ("What's New" B6)

If there is no author and you're working with an electronic article, use the first one or two words in your parenthetical citation, again, enclosed in quotation marks. Let's imagine you're working with a web article entitled, "Pie Baking for Fun and Profit" and with no author. Here's what that would look in a parenthetical citation:

> ("Pie Baking")

The parenthetical citation should be added at the end of the sentence that contains the source material. Let's go back to the Fogbottom example and see how a parenthetical citation would work:

> "Poodle grooming is a labor of love. It takes years of practice to be good at it, but once learned, it's a fun and worthwhile career" (Fogbottom).

Here's what it would look like if we used it with a paraphrase instead of a quotation:

> Although it takes a long time to become a skilled poodle groomer, it's well worth the effort and leads to a good career (Fogbottom).

Note that the citation is placed at the end of the sentence; the period comes after the parentheses. Misplacing the period is one of the most common formatting errors made by students.

Using parenthetical citation makes it crystal clear that a sentence comes from source material. This is, by far, the easiest way to cite or identify your source materials, too.

If using parenthetical citations is easy, why would we bother with using introduction or linking language to identify sources?

Good question! There would be nothing wrong with only using parenthetical citations all the way through your writing—it would absolutely do the job of citing the material. But, it wouldn't read smoothly and would feel somewhat rough because every time a parenthetical citation popped up, the reader would be "stopped" in place for a moment. Using a combination of introduction, linking language, and parenthetical citation, as needed, makes the writing smoother and easier to read. It also integrates the source material with the writer's ideas. We call this synthesis, and it's part of the craft of writing.

Works Cited Entries

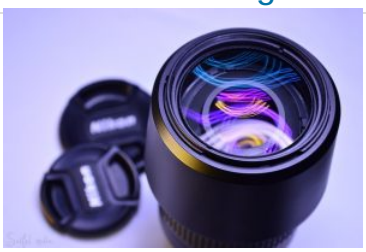
At the end of texts that have drawn from existing sources, you will often find a Works Cited page. This page gives more information than the parenthetical citations do about what kinds of sources were referenced in this work and where they can be found if the reader would like to know more about them. These entries all follow a specific and consistent format so that it is easy for readers to find the information they are looking for and so the shape and type of that information is consistent no matter who is writing the entries.

Until recently, the MLA required a slightly different format for every type of source—an entry for a Youtube video required certain information that was different from an entry for a book that was different from an entry for an online article. The most recent version of MLA, though—MLA 8—has simplified this so there is just one format rather than many.

You can learn how to create works cited entries in MLA 8 format, and see an example, in the "Creating a Works Cited Page" appendix to this text.

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10.2: Citing or Identifying Images in Your Writing



CC0 Public Domain Image

Increasingly, teachers allow and even encourage students to use images—photographs, maps, sketches, graphs, and so forth—in their writing. Before you do this, check with your teacher to make sure they approve. And then remember that if the image was created by someone else, you must give them credit.

We don't list images on the Works Cited page. But we do identify them in one of two ways:

1. If your word processor allows captioning, you can add the image information in a caption.
2. Otherwise, mention it in the text at the point you are talking about it, enclosing the information in parentheses.
3. Ideally, include the author(s), title of source, title of container, publisher, date, and location.

Here's an example of how you might cite a sketch taken from a hard copy book, where "The Perfect Poodle Hairdo" is the name of sketch and *Styling Poodles for Fun and Profit* is the book title:

> Groomer, Ima. "The Perfect Poodle Coif." *Styling Poodles for Fun and Profit*, Poodle Publishing, 2015.

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10.3: Handling Titles

Here are a few basic rules for formatting titles:

- Periodical and book titles are always italicized.
- Article and chapter titles are not italicized and are placed in quotation marks.
- Every word in a title is capitalized except for conjunctions (small joining words like and, but, or if), articles (a, an, and the), and prepositions (words that show position, like above, on, and between). Also, don't capitalize "to" when it's part of a verb (to Learn, to Practice, etc.).
- If a colon is used within the title, the word after the colon is always capitalized, e.g., Raising Golden Retrievers: An Exercise in Power Vacuuming.



Check Your Understanding:

Formatting Titles

You'll probably be working with all kinds of texts as you write essays and assignments for various college classes. Properly formatting the titles of your sources signals to your readers the type of source you're discussing (a book, an article, a short work, etc.). See if you can correctly capitalize and format the following titles:

1. Web article: people are happier when they spend time in the outdoors
2. Short story from a magazine: once upon a time: a tale of lost love
3. Book title: overcoming adversity in life
4. Newspaper article: two people apprehended in attempt to rob a bank

See the Appendix, Results for the "Check Your Understanding" Activities, for answers.

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10.4: Proofreading Your Work with Sources



Books in a stack by Evan Bench is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Here are a couple of reminders for polishing your work with MLA and sources:

1. Every written source mentioned in your paper must also be listed on Works Cited. (As we've discussed, images do not need to be listed on Works Cited but should be acknowledged in the paper.)
2. Anything listed on Works Cited must also appear in your paper. When proofreading, cross-check your in-paper sources and your Works Cited to make sure they match.

Check carefully to be sure each of these is correct and complete:

- Capitalization of titles
- Use of italics and quotation marks
- Use of punctuation (periods and commas)

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10.5: Using Citation Generators

A citation generator is a piece of software that creates a Works Cited list for the writer. The writer types in the details about the source, and the citation generator creates the citations and the Works Cited list.

Some of them also create in-text (parenthetical) citations.

Sounds too good to be true, yes?

That's because it is.

I have yet to find a citation generator that works correctly. Most make at least a couple of errors– often more– which means you end up having to go back and manually correct the source. And this means that if you would have just created your own source citation in the beginning, you would have saved time!

I always suggest that students stay away from citation generators for the above reason. I also feel that it's important to learn to do this skill on your own before turning to a piece of software: it's much like learning your multiplication tables before using a calculator to do it for you. Plus, the newest version of MLA (version 8) is so simple that creating citations is quick and easy.

That said, if you are lucky enough to find a citation generator that works, it may save you some time. But be wary. Remember what I said above: "I have yet to find a citation generator that works correctly." Our college's librarians have said the same.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Dealing with Obstacles and Developing Good Habits

11.1: Overcoming Writing Anxiety and Writer's Block

11.2: Good Writing Habits

11.3: Procrastination

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11.1: Overcoming Writing Anxiety and Writer's Block



“Overcoming Obstacles” by The U.S. Army is licensed under CC BY 2.0

You may be thinking, “All this advice is good, but sometimes I just get stuck! What I normally do just isn’t working!” That’s a familiar feeling for all writers. Sometimes the writing just seems to flow as if by magic, but then the flow stops cold. Your brain seems to have run out of things to say. If you just wait for the magic to come back, you might wait a long time. What professional writers know is that writing takes consistent effort. Writing comes out of a regular practice—a habit. Professional writers also know that not everything they write ends up in the final draft. Sometimes we have to write what Anne Lamott calls a “shitty rough draft.” One of my favorite writing professors, Duncan Carter, used to say that he was a terrible writer but a great reviser, and that’s what helped him write when inspiration wasn’t available. So how do writers get going when they feel stuck or uninspired? They develop a set of habits and have more than one way to write to get the words flowing again.

. . . . . .

You might associate the idea of writing anxiety or writer’s block with procrastination, and procrastination certainly can be either a cause or an effect of writing anxiety. You can learn more about procrastination later in this section of the text. But writing anxiety or writer’s block is more of a condition. We might even venture to call it an ailment. Uh oh. Do you have it? To aid you in self-diagnosis here, let’s take some time to figure out what it is. Then, if you find that you’re afflicted, we’ll help you to determine the best course of treatment.

What is Writing Anxiety and How Do You Know if You Have It?

Do you worry excessively about writing assignments? Do they make you feel uneasy or agitated? Do you have negative feelings about certain types of writing? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you might suffer from writing anxiety. Writing anxiety simply means that a writer is experiencing negative feelings about a given writing task. The last of the questions above points out something important about this condition that has been afflicting writers everywhere for centuries: writing anxiety is often more about the audience and/or purpose for a given writing task than it is about the mere act of writing itself.

Let’s consider this situational nature of writing anxiety for a moment. Say you just bought a new pair of headphones. You brought them home, removed all the packaging, plugged them into your MP3 player, and they’re amazing! So you decide to visit the company website, and you write a stellar review of the product, giving it a five-star rating and including descriptive details about the headphones’ comfortable fit, excellent sound quality, ability to cancel outside noise, and reasonable price.

Now, let’s say that the next day in biology class your instructor covers the topic of biomes, and you learn about animal habitats and biodiversity and the interrelation and interdependence of species within biomes. You find it fascinating and can’t wait to learn more. But then something terrible happens. Your instructor assigns a term project on the subject. As your instructor begins to describe the length and other specifications for the report, complete with formatting guidelines, citation requirements, and a bibliography at the end, your palms start to sweat, your stomach feels uneasy, and you begin to have trouble focusing on anything else your instructor has to say. You’re experiencing writing anxiety.

Writing anxiety is the condition of feeling uneasy about writing. Writer’s block is what you experience when you can’t manage to put words on the page. But your condition isn’t about the act of writing. Just yesterday you wrote a great review for those cool new headphones. So why do you suddenly feel paralyzed by the thought of writing the biology essay? Let’s consider some possible causes.

What Causes Writing Anxiety?

The causes of writing anxiety are many. Here are just a few:

- Inexperience with the type of writing task

- Previous negative experiences with writing (e.g. someone, maybe a teacher, has given you negative feedback or said negative things about your writing)
- Negative feelings bout writing (e.g. “I’m not a good writer”; “I hate writing.”)
- Immediate deadline
- Distant deadline
- Lack of interest in the topic
- Personal problems or life events

Level of experience may explain why you felt comfortable writing the headphone review while you break out in a sweat at the thought of the biology paper. If you’ve never written anything similar to a specific assignment, maybe you’re unsure about whether or not you can meet the assignment requirements or the teacher’s expectations. Or maybe the last time you turned in a written report for school you received negative feedback or a bad grade from the teacher. Maybe you procrastinated most of the term and now the paper is due next week and you feel overwhelmed. Or maybe it’s the second week of the term and the finals week deadline seems so far away that you’re not motivated to write.

Knowing the cause of your writing anxiety can help you move beyond it and get writing, even if you can’t completely eliminate the problem. If the topic doesn’t interest you or if you’re having problems at home, those probably aren’t issues that will just disappear, but if you try some of the following strategies, I think you’ll find that you can at least move forward with even the most anxiety-inducing of writing assignments.

Strategies for Overcoming or Managing Writing Anxiety

There are a number of strategies upon which you can draw to help you move past the feeling of being lost or stuck. Consider if some of the following tactics can help you to get writing again.

Just Start Writing

It might sound like it’s oversimplifying the matter, but it’s true. Half the battle is to just start writing. Try some strategies like freewriting or dialectic notetaking. (For more on freewriting, see “Strategies for Getting Started” in the “Prewriting” section of this text, and for more on dialectic notetaking, refer to the section on “Writing about Texts”). You should also believe in the importance of writing badly. Bruce Ballenger, a well-known writer and professor of English at Boise State explains why writing badly is an important part of the writing process:

Giving myself permission to write badly makes it much more likely that I will write what I don’t expect to write, and from those surprises will come some of my best writing. Writing badly is also a convenient alternative to staring off into space and waiting for inspiration.



Unsculpted Pottery Clay, CC0 Publuc Domain Image

Sometimes the biggest problem writers have with getting started is that they feel like the writing needs to be good, or well organized, or they feel like they need to start at the beginning. None of that is true. All you need to do is start.

Have you ever seen a potter make a clay pot? Before a potter can start shaping or throwing a pot, they have to bring the big wet blob of clay and slap it down on the table. It’s heavy and wet and messy, but it’s the essential raw material. No clay? No pot. “Bad writing” is a lot like that. You have to dump all the words and ideas onto the table. Just get them out. Only then do you have the raw material you need to start shaping the words into something beautiful and lasting. You can wait until the revision stages to worry about shaping your writing to be its best. For now, just get the ideas on the table.

Create Smaller Tasks and Short-Term Goals

One of the biggest barriers to writing can be that the task just seems too large, and perhaps the due date is weeks away. Each of these conditions can contribute to feelings of being overwhelmed or to the tendency to procrastinate. But the remedy is simple and will help you keep writing something each week toward your deadline and toward the finished product: divide larger writing tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks and set intermediate deadlines.

The process that the authors used for writing this text provides a good example. As authors, we had to divide the text into sections, but we also had to plan the process for a first draft, peer reviews, and revisions, along with adding images, links, and other resources, not to mention the final publication of the text online. Had we not divided up the larger tasks into smaller ones and set short-term goals and deadlines, the process of writing the text would have been overwhelming. We didn't meet every single intermediate deadline right on time, but they helped move us along and helped us to meet the most important deadline—the final one—with a complete text that was ready to publish on schedule.

Imagine that you have a term paper that's assigned during Week 1 of a eleven-week term, and it's due during finals week. Make a list of all the tasks you can think of that need to be completed, from beginning to end, to accomplish all that the assignment requires. List the tasks, and assign yourself due dates for each task. Consider taking it a step further and create a task table that allows you to include a column for additional notes. Here's an example:

Task	Complete by	Notes
Brainstorm topics and select a topic	Wed., Week 2	
Do some preliminary research on the Web to learn about the topic	Wed., Week 3	
Develop list of search terms for some more focused research	Fri., Week 3	Ask instructor to look over my search terms
Spend some time at the library searching library holdings and databases, and do some more focused research on the web	Mon., Week 4	Plan ahead to make sure I have time and transportation
Read sources and take notes	Mon., Week 5	Consult notetaking examples in my textbook
Create an outline for the term paper	Fri., Week 5	
Begin drafting	Mon., Week 6	Remember to try some freewriting
Complete first rough draft	Wed., Week 7	
Ask a couple of classmates to read draft and comment; meet with instructor and ask questions	Fri., Week 7	Ask classmates week before if they want to meet and exchange papers
Do some additional research if needed	Mon., Week 8	
Revise first draft and complete second draft with conclusion	Mon., Week 9	Try revision strategies we learned about in class
Meet with tutor in the Writing Center to go over my essay	Fri., Week 9	Call the Writing Center the week before for appt.
Make final revisions, proofread, make sure formatting is right, citations are in place, and works cited entries are correct	Fri., Week 10	Have someone new give it a final read-through.
Print, staple, and turn in (or save and upload) essay	Mon., Finals Week	Celebrate!

Collaborate

Get support from a friend, family member, or classmate. Talk to your friends or family, or to a tutor in your college writing center, about your ideas for your essay. Sometimes talking about your ideas is the best way to flesh them out and get more ideas flowing. Write down notes during or just after your conversation. Classmates are a great resource because they're studying the same subjects as you, and they're working on the same assignments. Talk to them often, and form study groups. Ask people to look at your ideas or writing and to give you feedback. Set goals and hold each other accountable for meeting deadlines (a little friendly competition can be motivating!).

Talk to other potential readers. Ask them what they would expect from this type of writing. Meet with a tutor in your campus writing center. Be sure to come to the appointment prepared with a printed copy of the assignment and a short list of what you want to work on, along with a printed copy of your essay.

For more about getting help from a tutor see "Why Meet with a Writing Tutor?" and "Preparing to Meet with a Tutor" in the "Giving and Receiving Feedback" section of this text.

Embrace Reality

Don't imagine the situation of your writing assignment to be any better or worse than it really is. There are some important truths for you to recognize:

- Focus on what you do best rather than fretting about your perceived weaknesses.
- Acknowledge that writing can be difficult and that all you need to do is do your best.
- Recognize what might be new or unfamiliar about the type of writing that you're doing.
- Understand that confusion and frustration is a natural part of experiencing new things, and it's okay; it's part of the learning process.
- Remember that you're a student and that you're supposed to be experiencing things that are new and unfamiliar (new formats, new audiences, new subject matter, new processes, new approaches, etc.).
- Repeat the mantra, "It doesn't have to be perfect; it just has to be DONE."

Seek Out Experts

If you can, find more experienced writers (especially related to the type of writing that you're doing) and ask them questions. Sometimes, this might just mean a friend or family member who's already taken a couple years of college courses. Maybe it's a fellow student who has already taken the class you're taking now. Also, the tutors in your college writing center can be a big help at any stage in the writing process. Give them a call and make an appointment. And don't forget the expert you see all the time throughout any class that you take: your instructor. Ask your instructor for suggestions. That's what she's there for.

Another way to learn from the experience of others is to look at examples of other pieces of writing of the type that you're working on. How is this piece organized? Does it make use of source material? What sort of tone does it use? If you don't know where to find examples, ask your instructor. If he doesn't have them at the ready, he'll likely be able to give you some suggestions about where to find some.

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11.2: Good Writing Habits

Many of the tips for overcoming writing anxiety discussed in the previous section are also just plain good tips for getting the job done. Here are a few more good writing habits.

Practice Recursive Writing

Use a variety of writing strategies (many of which you can gather from this text) and avoid the tendency to view writing as a linear process. If you acknowledge that the process of writing is recursive—meaning that you will come back to different parts of the process again and again—you are most likely to keep moving forward toward your final writing goal, and your writing is also likely to reveal your full potential as a writer.

When you return to a previously written section of a draft to generate new material, collaborate with others, or take a break from your writing and come back to it again, you're practicing recursive writing. Most successful writers will tell you that they practice recursive writing in some way. Good writing doesn't happen in a single late night cram session the day before the deadline. Good writing takes time. This includes time away from the writing itself to allow for distance and reflection, and good writing requires multiple drafts. That said, everyone finds themselves in a time crunch sometimes. If that's where you're at, check out "How to Fix Procrastination," found under the topic of "Procrastination," later in this section of the text.

Revise, Revise, Revise

As we've just explained, one linear trip through the writing process is not enough to achieve your best writing. In addition to strategies for generating material, you will also find revision strategies in this text. Try some different approaches to revision, and see which ones work best for you. Understand the difference between revision and proofreading, and make sure you allow ample time for each. Revision is the act of seeing something anew. This means considering higher level concerns in your essay, for example, the overall organization or how well you're addressing the audience or purpose for the piece. Proofreading is what you do at the end to make sure that your final draft is free from errors. For specific revision strategies, see the "Revising" section of this text.

Take Risks

If you play it too safe, there's probably not going to be anything original or imaginative about your essay. Good writing involves risk. Too often, inexperienced writers will begin writing from a position of considering only what they think their readers expect to read on the subject. What a boring world it would be if we only ever read or experienced what we expected! Begin by exploring your own thoughts and what most interests you about the topic. Open yourself to all the possibilities. Of course, this does not mean that you can forget about the parameters of the assignment or about the audience or purpose for your writing. But allow yourself to be creative first, and then think about how you can best tailor your own ideas to the audience and purpose dictated by your writing assignment.

Be Patient and Be Willing to Learn

Good writing takes patience. As with all good things, it takes time to create something good. And good writers also understand that a big part of writing is learning. You're selling yourself—and your readers—short if you begin the writing process with the idea that you already know everything you have to tell your readers about the subject. Even experts in a subject area continue to learn new things and expand the boundaries of their chosen fields (that's how they become experts!).

Neil deGrasse Tyson, a prominent American astrophysicist, writes about the importance of the quest for knowledge in his 2005 article for *Natural History Magazine*, "The Perimeter of Ignorance" (found online at naturalhistorymag.com). He explains that great scientific thinkers like Newton and Galileo were successful in expanding the boundaries of human understanding (the perimeters of ignorance, as Tyson calls them), precisely because they did not conform the reports of their findings to what society—and especially some of the most powerful institutions in society—expected them to report. I hope that you will also allow the creative and inquisitive potential of your mind to search beyond what you expect to say and what your readers might expect to hear about this topic.

Consider Environmental Factors

Finally, not all aspects of writing are about process or about the inner workings of your mind as a writer. Some factors are external or environmental. Consider what time of day is best for you to write. Write every day, or as often as you can, and establish a

schedule (as suggested in the section on overcoming writing anxiety, earlier in this text).

Don’t multitask. Recent studies have proven that the human brain does not operate at its best while multitasking. Switching between tasks has been shown to cause each of the tasks to take longer to complete than if they were handled independently (“Multitasking”). So put away your phone and turn off other distractions (like social media or the television). Find a quiet place to work where you are less likely to be disturbed. And don’t try to work on more than one subject or project at the same time. Make sure you have everything you need as you get started: pens, pencils, notebooks, textbooks, computer, snacks, or whatever you need to be productive and feel comfortable. Allot a set period of time to each task, and attend to each one separately.

Hopefully, these tips will help you to get started, help you gain some momentum, and help you to make the best use of that one precious resource that is limited for us all: time. As with any strategies, try different ones, and if something doesn’t work for you, move on and try something else. Select the strategies that work best for you, and modify them to suit your needs.



Discussion

Take two or three minutes to list some examples of a time when writing was difficult for you and you found it hard to get started. Note that that your list does not need to be constrained to times when you were writing for school, although you should consider those times too. But also consider other writing situations, such as applications, letters, or requests. Then, choose one of those times and take a couple more minutes to consider what barriers or obstacles may have made it difficult for you to write in that situation:

- Inexperience with the type of writing
- A previous negative experience with writing
- An immediate deadline
- A distant deadline
- A lack of interest in the topic
- Personal problems or challenges

Discuss your list of writing obstacles with some classmates in a small group. Then, as a group, try to identify some strategies or good writing practices discussed in this chapter that might have helped you overcome those obstacles. If class time allows for it, your small group might share some conclusions with the whole class about which strategies and practices would best suit the difficult writing situations that you discussed.

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11.3: Procrastination



Stop procrastination by Lynn Friedman is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Is procrastination always bad? Or is it a necessary part of your writing process?

What is it? What does it look like for you? For some people, having a writing assignment suddenly stirs a desire to clean, go for a walk, catch up on chores—do anything other than write. That's procrastination. Vacuuming CAN be the same as taking time to think about your topic or assignment, unless you never get to the actual writing.

How to use procrastination

If you know that you have a tendency to procrastinate, you can analyze your habits to find a way to get back to productive work. If you just have difficulty getting the words onto the page, you might try some techniques that don't feel like writing but produce results. Try some of these:

Bribe friends to listen and/or scribe. If you have more trouble with getting the words on the page, but like to talk over your ideas, invite a friend out for coffee or lunch in exchange for helping you out by writing down what you say about your assignment.

Use dictation software. Dictation software allows you to speak your ideas while the software captures your words onto the page. You may have dictation software already available on your own computer; it may be provided by your school; or you may find a free mobile application.

Use downtime to freewrite. If your problem is that you don't have enough big chunks of time, use the time you do have for some freewriting. That means keeping a notebook or electronic device handy so that you can fit in a quick bit of writing while you are riding the bus, stuck waiting at an appointment, or in between classes. Some authors write entire articles and even books by writing in small chunks throughout the day. Try using your phone or other device to leave yourself a voice message, or use an app that records and makes a written transcript of your voice.

Set a limit to procrastination. Limiting procrastination may be necessary if you find that you just waste time, or you may need to ask someone else for help.

Use a time limit/timer. If you find yourself procrastinating with social media or some other distraction, set a time limit on that activity and use an alarm to let you know when that time is up. There are even apps that will do this for you! You may also find that setting a time limit on your writing makes the writing feel less burdensome. After a certain amount of time, you might even give yourself a reward.

Set aside writing time. If you find time to do everything but work on your assignment, then you may need to set appointments with yourself to ensure that you have enough time set aside to write your paper.

Get an accountability partner. Some people find that they accomplish more by working with another person or a group that they feel accountable to. Having a regular meeting or a scheduled check-in where you have to show your work can ensure that you get it done.

Here are some potential resources for finding an accountability partner:

- Join a writing group—even a group of classmates.
- Ask a friend to check in with you.
- Make use of your instructor's office hour or visit your school's Writing Center.

Ask your instructor for an extension. If you are writing a class assignment, your instructor may be willing to give you an extension. Be aware that the instructor may say no to your request. You have the best chance of receiving an extension if you have been participating and turning in assignments on time before the request, make your request before the actual deadline, are able to

explain how you will use the additional time, and can show the instructor a draft or an outline so that she or he can see that an extension would result in completion of your assignment.

How to Fix Procrastination

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, you will find yourself having to complete a writing task just before the deadline, without adequate time. Use the time you have to make the best effort possible. Peter Elbow, a prominent writing expert, calls this “the dangerous method” because there is a strong chance that your work will not be good enough to meet the expectations of your instructor (or your audience, editor, etc.) But if this is your only option, it’s better to use the dangerous method than do nothing at all. (Note: If your assignment is to write a research paper, this method will not work if you start the night before the assignment is due. You may be able to write a draft or an outline, but you will not be able to complete the necessary research and write a long research paper in less than 24 hours.)

The first step is to figure out how much time you can realistically spend on the assignment. Then you can make a timeline that includes the tasks you need to complete. Here’s an example:

If you have an assignment due at 10 am on Friday, and you can start at 4 pm on Thursday, and you do not have class or work or major interruptions until 10 am on Friday:

4-5 pm: Review assignment and materials you need to refer to in your writing; make an outline or a list of the topics you need to include.

5-6 pm: Freewrite in 10 minute timed bursts, starting with an item on your list or outline. Whenever the timer goes off, review what you’ve written and decide to either continue on the same topic or move to another topic.

6-7 pm: Eat dinner and take a walk (or whatever you do to recharge that also allows your brain to continue working in the background. For some people, this means solitude; for others, this involves other people.) You may be tempted to skip steps like this due to your worry about completing the assignment. Don’t skip steps! if you want to work until midnight or later, you will need to take care of your body and brain to keep going. You will often find that when you return to your work, you have fresh ideas and perspectives.

7-10 pm: Continue timed free writing until you have written about as many of the topics as you can in this time period. Take a short break every hour, and make sure that you move, drink water, and perhaps have a healthy snack. Set an alarm or timer to ensure that you get back to your work as planned. Save one chunk of time to make a Works Cited page; use one chunk of time to insert any missing quotations and/or citations. Resist the urge to constantly reread the first part to revise it to perfection. That will keep you from finishing your draft. Remember the goal is to FINISH, not to write a perfect introduction.

10-11 pm: Complete the draft, making it into complete sentences and paragraphs. Write an introduction and conclusion if you don’t yet have these pieces.

11 pm-12 am: Review your work. (Suggestion: use the reverse outline method, discussed in the “Revising” section of this text.) Make sure, as best you can, that all required parts of your outline are included. Review the assignment and compare it to your draft.

12-7 or 8 am: Sleep. NOT KIDDING. Your body and brain need this time away from your work. When you get up, you will be better prepared to finish your paper by the deadline.

8-9 am: Proofread and edit your paper. Do the best you can, knowing that you will not have time to catch everything or make the paper perfect.

Travel to class, turn your work in online, or do whatever you need to do to get your piece turned in. Remind yourself that while this is not your best work, you got it done. Expect to receive feedback about what could be improved.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Revising

12.1: Higher vs. Lower Order Concerns
12.2: Reverse Outlining
12.3: Editing
12.4: Document Format, Documentation Style, and Proofreading
12.5: Giving and Receiving Feedback
12.6: What's Next?

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12.1: Higher vs. Lower Order Concerns



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After you have written a draft, sometimes you will need to make changes. In a college writing class, your instructor probably has requirements about revising your work. While you may feel that you write best "under pressure" the night before your assignment is due, writing a single draft at the last minute rarely results in your best work. You may also find that in college writing, you have to do more than simply write in correct sentences and organized paragraphs. You may feel that you've put a lot of effort into your first draft, and it can be challenging to think about changing your work or even eliminating words that you toiled over. But it's well worth the pain of revising to produce a polished piece of writing that others can easily understand. Your instructor will expect that you have carefully considered the writing task, possibly done some research, and given considerable thought to your ideas and to the needs of your reader/audience. It's unlikely that you will be able to do so without taking time in between drafts to reconsider your ideas and then revise your draft.

To revise a piece of writing, it may help you to think of three separate ways to improve your writing even if you combine those three ways or move back and forth between them. You can look at the big picture, check your organization, and also edit and proofread your final draft.

. . . . . .

Higher Order Concerns

Revising for higher order concerns means changing and revising sections of your paper and working on the organization of your ideas.

When you revise at the "big picture" stage, you are looking at the most important aspects of the writing tasks, and the ones that require the most thought. Here's a set of questions to help you revise for these higher order concerns:

- Have I met the purpose and requirements?
- Does my draft say what I mean?
- Have I changed my thinking through writing or researching?
- Are there parts that do not belong here? (For more help with this, see "Reverse Outlining" later in this section of the text.)
- Are there pieces missing?
- Are there places where the writing does not make sense?

- Is the tone right for my reader?
- Are my sources the right kind for my purpose and reader?
- Are all the pieces in the right place?
- Are sources documented?

Lower Order Concerns

Lower order concerns focus on editing and proofreading.

Perhaps you are the person who proofreads and edits as you write a draft, so when you are done drafting and revising for content and structure, you may not have that much editing or proofreading to do. Or maybe you are the person who pays no attention to grammar and spelling as you draft, saving all of the editing until you are finished writing. Either way, for college work (and professional work), plan to carefully edit and proofread your work. For most people, proofreading on a printed copy is more effective than working entirely on screen. Editing is the act of making changes or indicating what to change; proofreading means checking to make sure those changes were made.

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12.2: Reverse Outlining



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Often, outlining is recommended as an early component of the writing process, a way to organize and connect thoughts so the shape of what you are going to write is clear before you start drafting it. This is a tool many writers use that is probably already familiar to you.

Reverse outlining, though, is different in a few ways. First, it happens later in the process, after a draft is completed rather than before. Second, it gives you an opportunity to review and assess the ideas and connections that are actually present in the completed draft. This is almost an opposite approach from traditional outlining, as the traditional pre-writing outline considers an initial set of ideas, which might shift as the draft is actually being written and new ideas are added or existing ones are moved, changed, or removed entirely. A reverse outline can help you improve the structure and organization of your already-written draft, letting you see where support is missing for a specific point or where ideas don't quite connect on the page as clearly as you wanted them to.

How to Create a Reverse Outline

1. At the top of a fresh sheet of paper, write your primary thesis or claim for the text you want to outline. This should be the thesis exactly as it appears in your draft, not the thesis you know you intended. If you can't find the actual words, write down that you can't find them in this draft of the paper—it's an important note to make!
2. Draw a line down the middle of the page, creating two columns below your thesis.
3. Read, preferably out loud, the first body paragraph of your draft.
4. In the left column, write the single main idea of that paragraph (again, this should be using only the words that are actually on the page, not the ones you want to be on the page). If you find more than one main idea in a paragraph, write down all of them. If you can't find a main idea, write that down, too.
5. In the right column, state how the main idea of that paragraph supports the thesis.
6. Repeat steps 3-5 for each body paragraph of the draft.

Once you have completed these steps, you have a reverse outline! It might look a little something like this (this one is only looking at two paragraphs of a draft for the sake of example; yours will likely be looking at more paragraphs than just two):

Thesis: Katniss Everdeen, the heroine of The Hunger Games, creates as much danger for herself as she faces from others over the course of the film.

Main idea	How it supports the thesis
Body ¶1: She volunteers to fight in the games.	This is the root of most of the immediate danger she finds herself in, so her directly volunteering to do it definitely helped put her in font of that danger.
Body ¶2: Shooting the apple out of the pig's mouth.	This draws more attention to her and essentially puts a target on her back the other tributes will very much want to hit.

Working with the Results of Your Reverse Outline

Now what? You've probably already made some observations while completing this. Often students will speak up in class after we create these to tell me that they notice places where they are repeating themselves or that some of their paragraphs have too many points or don't clearly support the thesis.

There are a number of observations that can be made with the aid of a reverse outline, and a number of ways it can help you strengthen your paper. Try considering the following questions as you review yours.

Do Multiple Paragraphs Share the Same Main Idea?

If so, you might try combining them, paring back the information for that specific idea soit doesn't feel imbalanced in how much space it takes up, and/or organizing these paragraphs about the same point so they are next to each other in the paper.

Do Any Paragraphs Have Multiple Main Ideas?

Each paragraph should have only one primary focus. If you notice a paragraph does have more than one main idea, you could look for where some of those ideas might be discussed in other paragraphs and move them into a paragraph already focusing on that point, or select just the one main idea you think is most important to this paragraph and cut the other points out, or you might split that paragraph into multiple paragraphs and expand on each main idea.

Do Any Paragraphs Lack a Clear Main Idea?

If it was hard for you to find the main idea of a paragraph, it will also be hard for your reader to find. For paragraphs that don't yet have a main idea, consider whether the information in that paragraph points to a main idea that just isn't written on the page yet. If the information does all support one main idea, adding that idea to the paragraph might be all that is needed. Alternatively, you may find that some of the ideas fit into other paragraphs to support their ideas, or you may not need some of them in the next draft at all.

Do Any Main Ideas Not Connect Clearly and Directly Back to the Thesis?

Since the point of almost every paper is to support its thesis statement, this one can be critical. It should be clear how the main idea of each paragraph supports the thesis or claim of the paper. If that connection is not directly stated, ask yourself how the main idea of that paragraph furthers your thesis and then write that response.

Do Ideas Flow from Paragraph to Paragraph? Are There Gaps in Reasoning?

If a paper starts out introducing something that is a problem in a community, then presents a solution to the problem, and then talks about why the problem is…well, a problem, this organization is likely to confuse readers. Reorganizing to introduce the problem, discuss why it is a problem, and then move on to proposing a solution would do good work to help strengthen the next draft of this paper.

Note that you may need to move, revise, or add transition statements after moving paragraphs around.

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12.3: Editing

When you are working on improving the grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other formal aspects of your writing, instructors usually refer to that task as editing (not revising).

Use a checklist to ensure you are catching errors and actually fixing them. You may have seen examples of editing checklists. One type of checklist is a general list of common errors that writers often make; another type is a checklist based on an assignment; and a third type is a checklist you make yourself that tracks the kinds of errors you make most often. See the Grammar and Style Appendix for examples.

Using Technology to Edit

Computers revolutionized the way that we edit writing. Here are some useful tools to make editing easier and faster.

Find and Replace: If you know that you frequently make the same spelling or punctuation error, use the Find and Replace function in your word processor (in most, pressing and holding the “CTRL” key and then simultaneous pressing the “F” key will get you to the Find and Replace function). For example, if you know that you often type “though” instead of “through,” you can search for all instances of “though” and replace them, one by one, with “through,” checking each item to be sure you are making the right choice.

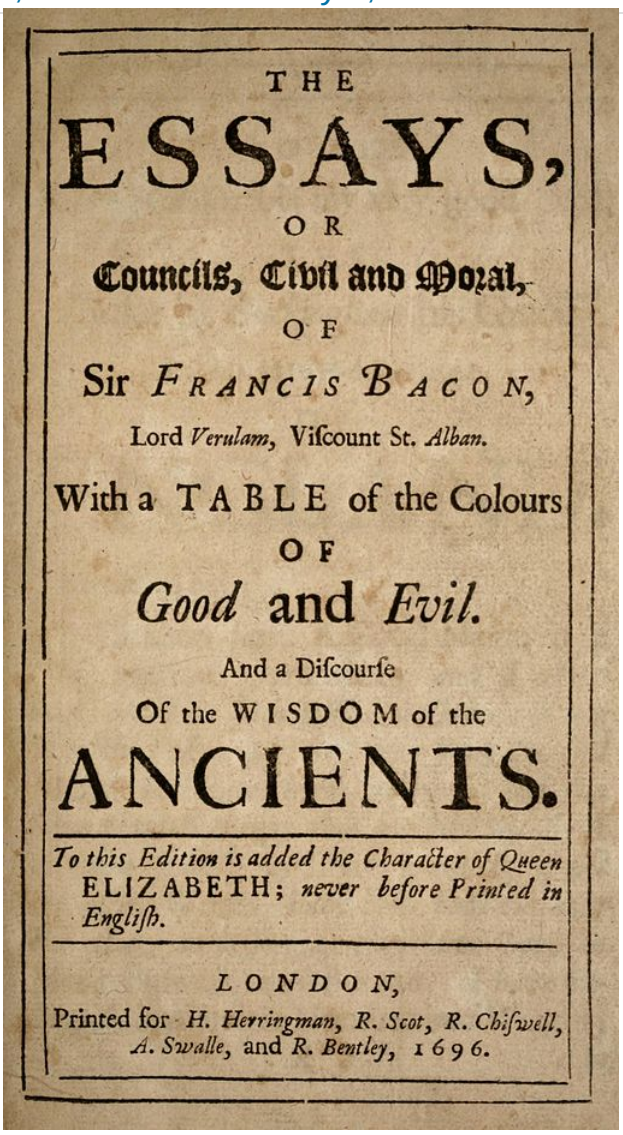
Spell checkers: Always use spell check. Do understand that spell check cannot find misspellings that are actual words. Spell check should mark “tge” as an error, but if you typed “accept” when you meant “except,” spell check will not help you. (See “Find and Replace” in the previous paragraph.)

Grammar checkers: Grammar checkers are sometimes correct, sometimes not. If you use a grammar checker and disagree with a suggested correction, use other resources such as dictionaries, grammar handbooks, or websites like Purdue OWL to determine what is correct. If you find that you often make a certain kind of mistake, it’s worthwhile to study up on the topic and perhaps keep an editing checklist (see the Grammar and Style appendix) to help you remember to check for that type of error. Whatever you do, don’t start randomly changing things just to make the grammar marks go away!

Screen readers: Sometimes it helps to hear your words aloud. Using a screen reader can do that for you, and it will definitely read a mistake as a mistake, without correcting it. Many word processing programs have a screen reader built in. There are also apps you can purchase, and some schools provide applications to students for free.

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12.4: Document Format, Documentation Style, and Proofreading


THE
ESSAYS,
OR
Councils, Civil and Moral,
OF
Sir FRANCIS BACON,
Lord Verulam, Viſcount St. Alban.
With a TABLE of the Colours
OF
Good and Evil.
And a Diſcourſe
Of the WISDOM of the
ANCIENTS.
To this Edition is added the Character of Queen ELIZABETH; never before Printed in Engliſh.
LONDON,
Printed for H. Herringman, R. Scot, R. Chiſwell, A. Swalle, and R. Bentley, 1696.

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Document Format

Make sure that you have formatted your document as required for the writing task. If you are writing an essay in MLA or APA style, make sure that you have checked for the correct margins, header, first page heading, cover page if required, page numbering, spacing, and other formatting details. If you are writing for the web, make sure that you know where to find the style guide or guidelines for the type of document you are working on. Writing a personal blog has different requirements than writing a professional blog for a website.

Here are some resources to help you:

- To learn more about MLA essay format, see the Purdue OWL article, "MLA General Format."
- To learn more about APA essay format, see the Purdue OWL article, "APA General Format."
- Also, see the "Using MLA to Format Your Documents" portion of the "Resources for Working with MLA" appendix of this text.

Documentation Style

Whenever you use material from another source, whether that means images, text, ideas, or media, you must do so ethically by giving credit to the originator. If you are writing a college essay, that usually means using either MLA or APA style. For academic writing, citing within your essay and also providing a bibliography are required. When writing for the web, you may be providing links to the original source and/or a list of sources.

Here are some resources to help you:

- To learn more about MLA documentation, see the Purdue OWL article, "MLA Formatting and Style Guide."
- To learn more about APA documentation, see the Purdue OWL article, "APA Formatting and Style Guide."
- Also, see the "Four-Step Process for Working with Sources" portion of the "Resources for Working with MLA" appendix of this text

Proofreading

Proofreading is the final step, and it means using a system to ensure you've made all the corrections necessary.

Using a System

Circle, highlight, underline: Select one method to mark all the corrections you want to make. You might choose to circle, underline, or highlight all errors you find. Check off each circle, highlight, or underline when you make the correction in the electronic document.

Check marks and checkboxes: Some writers make a check mark in the margin for every error they find in a line of typing, then put a slash through the check mark once it is corrected. You can also make checkboxes and then check the box once the correction is made.

Using editor's marks: You may have certain marks that you have learned to make for some kinds of errors, either from an instructor or from professional editing marks. If so, feel free to use those. For an extensive list of editing marks, consult the proofreading page at the Chicago Manual of style online (at chicagomanualofstyle.org).

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12.5: Giving and Receiving Feedback

In many writing classes, students are expected to learn how to give feedback to their peers. This task is usually called peer review, a concept you will also learn about when you begin to use academic research. At first, this may seem intimidating. Writers may think, “I’m not a teacher–how can I give useful feedback to another writer?” What writers CAN do is give their peers an honest reaction as a reader and give advice based on their own experience. It is ultimately up to the writer to decide if they want to make sure of the feedback given. If you feel unsure of your ability to give feedback, remember that you are learning from the process. In a class, the other students will also receive feedback from the instructor.

This understanding may also help students who don’t feel that other students are qualified to give feedback. If you feel that the advice given to you by a peer isn’t right, you can choose to ignore it or decide to check with your instructor first. Remember that your peers are learning how to give feedback, just as you are.

Giving feedback on writing is a powerful skill that you may use outside of school for work projects, for personal writing, or even to help your children with their homework.

Giving Peer Feedback

When your role in peer review is to give feedback, your job is to help the writer by giving your reaction as a reader to the writing. Think about the kind of feedback you would like to get and also how you would like that feedback to be given. What follows here are some basic rules to follow for responding to someone else’s writing.

First, listen to the writer. What kind of feedback are they asking for? Do they want to know if their thesis is clear? Do they have questions about citing sources? Make a note about what kind of feedback the writer has requested and keep that in mind as you respond.

Be kind. When you are receiving criticism, isn’t it easier to hear if the person giving the criticism is kind and respectful to you? Do the same for your peer.

Comment on the higher order concerns first. That means asking questions about anything that confuses you, checking to see if the writing did what the assignment called for, and considering if the order of the paper makes sense. Sometimes your instructor will give you specific things they want you to comment on; if so, be sure you do so.

Use “I” statements to help stay focused on your reaction to the writing. For example, instead of saying, “You aren’t clear in this paragraph,” try saying, “I’m confused in this paragraph. Did you mean X or Y?”

Be specific. Never say “I liked it” or “It was good” unless you follow up with an explanation of exactly what you liked or thought was good. The same goes for criticism; say exactly what confused you or what was missing.

Ask questions. Use questions to clarify what the writer means, what the resources given are saying, and what the writer is trying to do.

Offer advice based on your own experience. For example, you could say “if this were my paper, the two things I would do next are A and B.” Provide options such as, “If you wanted to expand this, you could do A, B, or C.”

Don’t try to make the writer sound like you. If a word is the wrong word, note that, but if you just think of a word you like better, that’s just a matter of style and voice.

Don’t edit your peer’s writing for them. Only comment on editing when the writing is a final draft or when your instructor has included checking for errors in the instructions for peer review. Correcting errors is important at some point, but it makes no sense to spend time editing a paragraph if that paragraph may needs to be deleted or changed. It’s okay to remind the writer to run spell check and grammar check if you notice minor errors. Otherwise, only ask about editing errors if you have trouble understanding the sentence because of the mistakes. If your instructor does want you to comment on editing, be sure to follow the instructions. Remember that the responsibility for correcting the errors lies with the writer, not with you.

When providing peer feedback, it can be helpful to have an understanding of higher order and lower order concerns. See “Higher vs. Lower Order Concerns” in the “Revising” section to learn more.

Make the Most of Peer Feedback

Now let's consider your role in receiving feedback, not giving it. Are you eager to get feedback? Scared to share your work? If you are receiving feedback from your peers, remember that ultimately you get to decide what feedback to accept. If you don't think the feedback is correct, ask your instructor what they think. And give your peers a break; they are also just learning how to give feedback.

One way to improve the feedback you get is to ask for the kind of feedback you want. Don't be afraid to give your peer reviewer some direction.

Listen to or read the feedback with an open mind. Consider that the peer reviewer is your reader. It's good to know what a real reader got out of your writing.

If you aren't sure about the feedback or feel upset about it, reconsider the suggestions after a break. It's okay to say, "I'll think about that." If you feel that the reviewer is trying to change your style so that the paper doesn't sound like you anymore, consider whether the feedback helps you make the paper better. If not, feel free to set that feedback aside.

Why Meet with a Writing Tutor?

Sometimes your instructor may ask you to visit the Writing Center, or it may even be a requirement for your class. Or you may just be curious about what a writing tutor has to offer. Many colleges have writing centers or subscribe to online services that provide tutoring in writing. What's the benefit?

Writing tutors offer you another perspective on your writing. They serve as a real audience for your words and ideas. In addition to that, they have some additional expertise either because they are more experienced writers or they are writing instructors. Writing tutors also have experience with resources for writing that you may not be aware of.

Preparing to Meet with a Tutor

To prepare for a Writing Center session, print your paper out and consider printing a second copy to make it easier for both you and the tutor to read along at the same time. Be ready to take notes and listen carefully. It's helpful if you bring the assignment or have access to it online. Your tutor will spend a few minutes in the beginning of the session figuring out what you are writing, what the requirements are, and when your work is due. They may ask what you have already done to improve the writing, and they will almost always ask you what you would like help with.

Keep in mind that your tutor will want to focus on a few important things rather than try to catch every little thing in your paper. Tutors won't edit your paper for you, but they can help you learn how to edit your own work better. Don't be surprised if your tutor shows you how to use a writing resource such as a handbook or the Purdue OWL online; part of the tutor's job is to help you learn to navigate resources on your own, so that you eventually have the same tools as the tutor.

At the end of a session, the tutor will probably ask you what you plan to do next with your writing. That's how they check to see that you got what you needed from the session and that you understood the advice given. After you revise your writing, you may want to schedule another tutoring session to work on additional aspects of the assignment.

What about Getting Help from a Friend or Family Member?

Getting feedback from a reader outside of your class can sometimes be a good idea. If you want to ask a friend or family member for feedback, set some ground rules. They should follow the same rules as a peer reviewer. At the very least, asking a friend or family member to read your paper aloud will help you hear how your paper sounds. You will probably catch more errors, too.

Preparing for a Student/Teacher Conference

Getting in-person help from your instructor is one of the best ways to receive feedback. You can prepare for a conference with your instructor so that you get the most out of it. Usually, a conference happens with just you and your instructor. Friends aren't invited, and parents can only attend with your permission due to the Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA). See this handy link to "FERPA General Guidance for Students" from the US Department of Education (found at www2.ed.gov).

Bring your best work to the conference. The more effort you have already made means that the instructor won't waste time telling you things you already know you need to fix. Re-read your work before the conference and prepare some questions. What do you think is working? What do you need help with? During the conference, take notes. If the instructor writes anything down, ask if you can take their notes with you. At the end of the conference, work with your instructor on an action plan to revise your work.

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12.6: What's Next?



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Congratulations! You've done it. You've reached the end of this book, and hopefully you know more about writing than you did when you started.

If we've done our job well, we've answered many of your questions, helped you come up with new ones, given you a toolbox of fresh skills, and broadened your exposure to writing. And you? You've put hours of time and practice into becoming a stronger writer, and you've reaped the benefits and pride of those efforts. Well done!

So, what's next? How can you keep polishing and using your new writing skills? Here are a few suggestions:

- First and foremost, write! Try to write a little every day. Many writers accomplish this by keeping a journal or diary.
- Keep your writing skills fine-tuned by reading articles (online or in a hard copy newspaper or magazine) and then writing quick summaries or even short essays in which you respond to or argue with the articles. Doing this is fun and will keep your skills sharp.
- Push yourself even more by creating a blog or social media site where you can post some of your writing or create a daily paragraph or two about a favorite topic. Making your writing available publicly is a big step and will boost your growing confidence.
- Write letters to friends and family members. They'll love receiving them, and you may even get a reply.
- Take a class! You can find writing classes in your local community education centers as well as community (junior) colleges and most universities.
- And, this is very important: read. Read something every day, whether a newspaper story, blog post, magazine article, or a favorite book. Being a good reader will help strengthen your writing skills through exposure to all sorts of ideas, essay structures, and language use.

Like any other skill set, your writing will improve, become easier, and increasingly enjoyable with practice. Here's wishing you continued growth and even more pride as you move further into the world of writing!

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Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

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