INTRODUCTION TO COLLEGE COMPOSITION

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LibreTexts™

College Composition: English 1001

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Licensing

1: An Overview of the Writing Process

- 1.1: Introduction to Writing
- 1.2: Your Role as a Learner
- 1.3: What is an Essay?
- 1.4: Defining the Writing Process
- 1.5: Videos- Prewriting Techniques
- 1.6: Audience
- 1.7: Thesis Statements
- 1.8: Organizing an Essay
- 1.9: Creating Paragraphs
- 1.10: Paragraphs
- 1.11: Introductions
- 1.12: Conclusions
- 1.13: Comparative Chart of Writing Strategies

2: Writing with Generative AI

- 2.1: What is Generative AI?
- 2.2: Ethics of AI-Generated Writing
- 2.3: AI for Idea Generation
- 2.4: AI for Organizing Writing
- 2.5: Edit and Revise with AI
- 2.6: Problems and Pitfalls of AI-Generated Texts
- 2.7: Guides and Resources for Writing with AI

3: Engaging with Texts- Read and Respond

- 3.1: Reading to Write
- 3.2: How to Read Like a Writer
- 3.3: Interpretation, Analysis, and Close Reading
  - 3.3.1: Interpretation
  - 3.3.2: Analysis
  - 3.3.3: Techniques
- 3.4: Summary and Response
  - 3.4.1: Techniques
  - 3.4.2: Model Texts by Student Authors
- 3.5: Analysis and Synthesis
  - 3.5.1: Techniques
  - 3.5.2: Activities
  - 3.5.3: Model Texts by Student Authors
- 3.6: Putting It Together- Writing Your Response
  - 3.6.1: Model Texts by Student Authors

4: Understanding Our Stories- Personal Narrative Writing

- 4.1: Introduction to Narrative Essay
- 4.2: The Art of Narration
- 4.3: Video- The Danger of a Single Story
- 4.4: Model Narrative Essays
  - 4.4.1: Only Daughter by Sandra Cisneros
  - 4.4.2: Superman and Me by Sherman Alexie
  - 4.4.3: Fish Cheeks by Amy Tan
  - 4.4.4: Salvation by Langston Hughes
  - 4.4.5: The Year I Grew Wildly, While Men Looked On by Ashley Ford
- 4.5: Narrative Techniques- Your Writing Process
- 4.6: Writing for Success- Narration
- 4.7: Describing a Scene or Experience
  - 4.7.1: Section Introduction- Describing a Scene or Experience
  - 4.7.2: Techniques
  - 4.7.3: Activites
  - 4.7.4: Model Texts by Student Authors
- 4.8: Telling a story
  - 4.8.1: Section Introduction- Telling a Story
  - 4.8.2: Techniques
  - 4.8.3: Activities
  - 4.8.4: Model Texts by Student Authors
- 4.9: Reflecting on an Experience
  - 4.9.1: Section Introduction- Reflecting on an Experience
  - 4.9.2: Techniques
  - 4.9.3: Activities
  - 4.9.4: Model Texts by Student Authors
- 4.10: Narrative Beginnings and Endings
- 4.11: Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative
  - 4.11.1: Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative
  - 4.11.2: Model Texts by Student Authors
  - 4.11.3: Endnotes
- 4.12: Supporting Storytelling with AI

5: Exploring Our World- Expository Writing

- 5.1: Expository vs. Argumentative Writing
- 5.2: Effective Thesis Statements
- 5.3: Video- Thesis Explained
- 5.4: Definition Essay Overview
- 5.5: How to Write an Expository Definition Essay
- 5.6: Illustration/Example Approach
- 5.7: Cause and Effect Approach
- 5.8: Classification Approach
- 5.9: Process Analysis Approach
- 5.10: Student Sample- Definition-Expository Essay

6: Finding, Understanding, and Using Outside Sources

- 6.1: Writing with Outside Evidence
- 6.2: Effectively Integrating Textual Evidence
- 6.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism
- 6.4: MLA Format
- 6.5: Formatting the Works Cited Page (MLA)
- 6.6: Citing Generative AI Content

7: Revising and Polishing Your Papers

- 7.1: Revising
- 7.2: Editing and Proofreading
- 7.3: Formal Academic Voice
- 7.4: AI for Revision and Editing
- 7.5: Peer Review Checklist

8: Taking a Stand- Argument Writing

- 8.1: Introduction to Argument Essay
- 8.2: Techniques
- 8.3: Avoiding Logical Fallacies
- 8.4: Writing for Success- Argument
- 8.5: Activities
- 8.6: Model Texts by Student Authors

9: Entering the Conversation- Your Research Process

- 9.1: Researching a writing assignment
- 9.2: Introduction
- 9.3: Sources
- 9.4: Techniques
- 9.5: Evaluating Source Credibility
- 9.6: Finding sources- Academic databases
- 9.7: Reading sources
- 9.8: Using sources
- 9.9: Citing sources
- 9.10: Review- Basic citation styles
- 9.11: Model Texts by Student Authors

10: Creating Presentations - Sharing Your Ideas

- 10.1: Organizing a Visual Presentation
- 10.2: Incorporating Effective Visuals into a Presentation
- 10.3: Giving a Presentation
- 10.E: Creating Presentations - Sharing Your Ideas (Exercises)

11: Grammar Essentials

- 11.1: Punctuation
  - 11.1.1: Apostrophes
  - 11.1.2: Brackets
  - 11.1.3: Colons

- 11.1.4: Commas
- 11.1.5: Dashes
- 11.1.6: Ellipses
- 11.1.7: Exclamation Marks
- 11.1.8: Hyphens
- 11.1.9: Parentheses
- 11.1.10: Periods
- 11.1.11: Question Marks
- 11.1.12: Quotation Marks
- 11.1.13: Semicolons
- 11.1.14: Try It Out
- 11.1.15: Putting It All Together
- 11.1.16: Time to Write

- 11.2: Parts of Speech
  - 11.2.1: Nouns
  - 11.2.2: Pronouns
  - 11.2.3: Verbs
  - 11.2.4: Adjectives
  - 11.2.5: Adverbs
  - 11.2.6: Propositions
  - 11.2.7: Articles
  - 11.2.8: Conjunctions
  - 11.2.9: Interjections
  - 11.2.10: Try It Out
  - 11.2.11: Putting It All Together
  - 11.2.12: Time to Write

- 11.3: 20 Most Common Grammar Errors
  - 11.3.1: Wrong Word
  - 11.3.2: Comma After Introductory Element
  - 11.3.3: Documentation Common Error
  - 11.3.4: Pronoun Reference
  - 11.3.5: Spelling
  - 11.3.6: Quotation Error
  - 11.3.7: Unnecessary Comma
  - 11.3.8: Capitalization
  - 11.3.9: Missing Word
  - 11.3.10: Faulty Sentence Structure
  - 11.3.11: Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element
  - 11.3.12: Verb Tense Shift
  - 11.3.13: Missing Comma in Compound Sentence
  - 11.3.14: Apostrophe Errors
  - 11.3.15: Run-On Sentences
  - 11.3.16: Comma Splice
  - 11.3.17: Pronoun Agreement
  - 11.3.18: Poorly Integrated Quote
  - 11.3.19: Hyphens
  - 11.3.20: Sentence Fragment
  - 11.3.21: Try It Out
  - 11.3.22: Putting It All Together

- 11.3.23: Time to Write

Index

Glossary

Detailed Licensing

Detailed Licensing

Licensing

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

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: An Overview of the Writing Process

Learning Objectives

- Identify and share attitudes about writing
- Demonstrate the stages of the writing process
- Communicate perceived writing strengths and weaknesses as well as writing goals for the course

1.1: Introduction to Writing
1.2: Your Role as a Learner
1.3: What is an Essay?
1.4: Defining the Writing Process
1.5: Videos- Prewriting Techniques
1.6: Audience
1.7: Thesis Statements
1.8: Organizing an Essay
1.9: Creating Paragraphs
1.10: Paragraphs
1.11: Introductions
1.12: Conclusions
1.13: Comparative Chart of Writing Strategies

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1.1: Introduction to Writing

Learning Objectives

- Understand the expectations for reading and writing assignments in college courses.
- Understand and apply general strategies to complete college-level reading assignments efficiently and effectively.
- Recognize specific types of writing assignments frequently included in college courses.
- Understand and apply general strategies for managing college-level writing assignments.
- Determine specific reading and writing strategies that work best for you individually.

As you begin this section, you may be wondering why you need an introduction. After all, you have been writing and reading since elementary school. You completed numerous assessments of your reading and writing skills in high school and as part of your application process for college. You may write on the job, too. Why is a college writing course even necessary?

When you are eager to get started on the coursework in your major that will prepare you for your career, getting excited about an introductory college writing course can be difficult. However, regardless of your field of study, honing your writing skills—and your reading and critical-thinking skills—gives you a more solid academic foundation.

In college, academic expectations change from what you may have experienced in high school. The quantity of work you are expected to do is increased. When instructors expect you to read pages upon pages or study hours and hours for one particular course, managing your work load can be challenging. This chapter includes strategies for studying efficiently and managing your time.

The quality of the work you do also changes. It is not enough to understand course material and summarize it on an exam. You will also be expected to seriously engage with new ideas by reflecting on them, analyzing them, critiquing them, making connections, drawing conclusions, or finding new ways of thinking about a given subject. Educationally, you are moving into deeper waters. A good introductory writing course will help you swim.

Table 1 summarizes some of the other major differences between high school and college assignments.

Table 1 - High School versus College Assignments

High School	College
Reading assignments are moderately long. Teachers may set aside some class time for reading and reviewing the material in depth.	Some reading assignments may be very long. You will be expected to come to class with a basic understanding of the material.
Teachers often provide study guides and other aids to help you prepare for exams.	Reviewing for exams is primarily your responsibility.
Your grade is determined by your performance on a wide variety of assessments, including minor and major assignments. Not all assessments are writing based.	Your grade may depend on just a few major assessments. Most assessments are writing based.
Writing assignments include personal writing and creative writing in addition to expository writing.	Outside of creative writing courses, most writing assignments are expository.
The structure and format of writing assignments is generally stable over a four-year period.	Depending on the course, you may be asked to master new forms of writing and follow standards within a particular professional field.
Teachers often go out of their way to identify and try to help students who are performing poorly on exams, missing classes, not turning in assignments, or just struggling with the course. Often teachers will give students many “second chances.”	Although teachers want their students to succeed, they may not always realize when students are struggling. They also expect you to be proactive and take steps to help yourself. “Second chances” are less common.

This chapter covers the types of reading and writing assignments you will encounter as a college student. You will also learn a variety of strategies for mastering these new challenges—and becoming a more confident student and writer.

Throughout this chapter, you will follow a first-year student named Crystal. After several years of working as a saleswoman in a department store, Crystal has decided to pursue a degree in elementary education and become a teacher. She is continuing to work part-time, and occasionally she finds it challenging to balance the demands of work, school, and caring for her four-year-old son. As you read about Crystal, think about how you can use her experience to get the most out of your own college experience.

? Exercise 1.1.1

Review Table 1 and think about how you have found your college experience to be different from high school so far. Respond to the following questions:

1. In what ways do you think college will be more rewarding for you as a learner?
2. What aspects of college do you expect to find most challenging?
3. What changes do you think you might have to make in your life to ensure your success in college?

Reading Strategies

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

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

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

Planning Your Reading

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

Managing Your Reading Time

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

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

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

tip

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

Setting a Purpose

The other key component of planning is setting a purpose. Knowing what you want to get out of a reading assignment helps you determine how to approach it and how much time to spend on it. It also helps you stay focused during those occasional moments when it is late, you are tired, and relaxing in front of the television sounds far more appealing than curling up with a stack of journal articles.

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

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

Improving Your Comprehension

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

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

Identifying the Main Points

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

- **Textbooks.** These usually include summaries, glossaries, comprehension questions, and other study aids.
- **Nonfiction trade books.** These are less likely to include the study features found in textbooks.
- **Popular magazine, newspaper, or web articles.** These are usually written for a general audience.

- **Scholarly books and journal articles.** These are written for an audience of specialists in a given field.

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

Some texts make that task relatively easy. Textbooks, for instance, include the aforementioned features as well as headings and subheadings intended to make it easier for students to identify core concepts. Graphic features, such as sidebars, diagrams, and charts, help students understand complex information and distinguish between essential and inessential points. When you are assigned to read from a textbook, be sure to use available comprehension aids to help you identify the main points.

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

- **Trade books.** Many trade books include an introduction that presents the writer's main ideas and purpose for writing. Reading chapter titles (and any subtitles within the chapter) will help you get a broad sense of what is covered. It also helps to read the beginning and ending paragraphs of a chapter closely. These paragraphs often sum up the main ideas presented.
- **Popular articles.** Reading the headings and introductory paragraphs carefully is crucial. In magazine articles, these features (along with the closing paragraphs) present the main concepts. Hard news articles in newspapers present the gist of the news story in the lead paragraph, while subsequent paragraphs present increasingly general details.

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

When you read scholarly books and journal articles, try to apply the same strategies discussed earlier. The introduction usually presents the writer's **thesis**, the idea or hypothesis the writer is trying to prove. Headings and subheadings can help you understand how the writer has organized support for his or her thesis. Additionally, academic journal articles often include a summary at the beginning, called an abstract, and electronic databases include summaries of articles, too.

Monitoring Your Comprehension

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

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

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

1. **Summarize.** At the end of each section, pause to summarize the main points in a few sentences. If you have trouble doing so, revisit that section.
2. **Ask and answer questions.** When you begin reading a section, try to identify two to three questions you should be able to answer after you finish it. Write down your questions and use them to test yourself on the reading. If you cannot answer a question, try to determine why. Is the answer buried in that section of reading but just not coming across to you? Or do you expect to find the answer in another part of the reading?
3. **Do not read in a vacuum.** Look for opportunities to discuss the reading with your classmates. Many instructors set up online discussion forums or blogs specifically for that purpose. Participating in these discussions can help you determine whether your understanding of the main points is the same as your peers'.

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

As a working mother, Crystal found that the best time to get her reading done was in the evening, after she had put her four-year-old to bed. However, she occasionally had trouble concentrating at the end of a long day. She found that by actively working to summarize the reading and asking and answering questions, she focused better and retained more of what she read. She also found that evenings were a good time to check the class discussion forums that a few of her instructors had created.

? Exercise 1.1.2

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

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

tip

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

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

Taking It to the Next Level: Active Reading

Now that you have acquainted (or reacquainted) yourself with useful planning and comprehension strategies, college reading assignments may feel more manageable. You know what you need to do to get your reading done and make sure you grasp the main points. However, the most successful students in college are not only competent readers but active, engaged readers.

Using the SQ3R Strategy

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

1. **Survey** the text in advance.
2. Form **questions** before you start reading.
3. **Read** the text.
4. **Recite** and/or **record** important points during and after reading.
5. **Review** and **reflect** on the text after you read.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

? Exercise 1.1.3

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

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

Using Other Active Reading Strategies

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

- **Connect what you read to what you already know.** Look for ways the reading supports, extends, or challenges concepts you have learned elsewhere.
- **Relate the reading to your own life.** What statements, people, or situations relate to your personal experiences?
- **Visualize.** For both fiction and nonfiction texts, try to picture what is described. Visualizing is especially helpful when you are reading a narrative text, such as a novel or a historical account, or when you read expository text that describes a process, such as how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- **Pay attention to graphics as well as text.** Photographs, diagrams, flow charts, tables, and other graphics can help make abstract ideas more concrete and understandable.
- **Understand the text in context.** Understanding context means thinking about who wrote the text, when and where it was written, the author's purpose for writing it, and what assumptions or agendas influenced the author's ideas. For instance, two writers might both address the subject of health care reform, but if one article is an opinion piece and one is a news story, the context is different.
- **Plan to talk or write about what you read.** Jot down a few questions or comments in your notebook so you can bring them up in class. (This also gives you a source of topic ideas for papers and presentations later in the semester.) Discuss the reading on a class discussion board or blog about it.

As Crystal began her first semester of elementary education courses, she occasionally felt lost in a sea of new terms and theories about teaching and child development. She found that it helped to relate the reading to her personal observations of her son and other kids she knew.

WRITING AT WORK

Many college courses require students to participate in interactive online components, such as a discussion forum, a page on a social networking site, or a class blog. These tools are a great way to reinforce learning. Do not be afraid to be the student who starts the discussion.

Remember that when you interact with other students and teachers online, you need to project a mature, professional image. You may be able to use an informal, conversational tone, but complaining about the work load, using off-color language, or "flaming" other participants is inappropriate.

Active reading can benefit you in ways that go beyond just earning good grades. By practicing these strategies, you will find yourself more interested in your courses and better able to relate your academic work to the rest of your life. Being an interested, engaged student also helps you form lasting connections with your instructors and with other students that can be personally and professionally valuable. In short, it helps you get the most out of your education.

Common Writing Assignments

College writing assignments serve a different purpose than the typical writing assignments you completed in high school. In high school, teachers generally focus on teaching you to write in a variety of modes and formats, including personal writing, expository writing, research papers, creative writing, and writing short answers and essays for exams. Over time, these assignments help you build a foundation of writing skills.

In college, many instructors will expect you to already have that foundation.

Your college composition courses will focus on writing for its own sake, helping you make the transition to college-level writing assignments. However, in most other college courses, writing assignments serve a different purpose. In those courses, you may use writing as one tool among many for learning how to think about a particular academic discipline.

Additionally, certain assignments teach you how to meet the expectations for professional writing in a given field. Depending on the class, you might be asked to write a lab report, a case study, a literary analysis, a business plan, or an account of a personal interview. You will need to learn and follow the standard conventions for those types of written products.

Finally, personal and creative writing assignments are less common in college than in high school. College courses emphasize expository writing, writing that explains or informs. Often expository writing assignments will incorporate outside research, too. Some classes will also require persuasive writing assignments in which you state and support your position on an issue. College instructors will hold you to a higher standard when it comes to supporting your ideas with reasons and evidence.

Table 2 lists some of the most common types of college writing assignments. It includes minor, less formal assignments as well as major ones. Which specific assignments you encounter will depend on the courses you take and the learning objectives developed by your instructors.

Table 2 - Common Types of College Writing Assignments

Assignment Type	Description	Example
Personal Response Paper	Expresses and explains your response to a reading assignment, a provocative quote, or a specific issue; may be very brief (sometimes a page or less) or more in-depth	For an environmental science course, students watch and write about President Obama's June 15, 2010, speech about the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.
Summary	Restates the main points of a longer passage objectively and in your own words	For a psychology course, students write a one-page summary of an article about a man suffering from short-term memory loss.
Position Paper	States and defends your position on an issue (often a controversial issue)	For a medical ethics course, students state and support their position on using stem cell research in medicine.
Problem-Solution Paper	Presents a problem, explains its causes, and proposes and explains a solution	For a business administration course, a student presents a plan for implementing an office recycling program without increasing operating costs.
Literary Analysis	States a thesis about a particular literary work (or works) and develops the thesis with evidence from the work and, sometimes, from additional sources	For a literature course, a student compares two novels by the twentieth-century African American writer Richard Wright.
Research Review or Survey	Sums up available research findings on a particular topic	For a course in media studies, a student reviews the past twenty years of research on whether violence in television and movies is correlated with violent behavior.
Case Study or Case Analysis	Investigates a particular person, group, or event in depth for the purpose of drawing a larger conclusion from the analysis	For an education course, a student writes a case study of a developmentally disabled child whose academic performance improved because of a behavioral-modification program.
Laboratory Report	Presents a laboratory experiment, including the hypothesis, methods of data collection, results, and conclusions	For a psychology course, a group of students presents the results of an experiment in which they explored whether sleep deprivation produced memory deficits in lab rats.
Research Journal	Records a student's ideas and findings during the course of a long-term research project	For an education course, a student maintains a journal throughout a semester-long research project at a local elementary school.
Research Paper	Presents a thesis and supports it with original research and/or other researchers' findings on the topic; can take several different formats depending on the subject area	For examples of typical research projects, see Chapter 12 "Writing a Research Paper".

WRITING AT WORK

Part of managing your education is communicating well with others at your university. For instance, you might need to e-mail your instructor to request an office appointment or explain why you will need to miss a class. You might need to contact administrators with questions about your tuition or financial aid. Later, you might ask instructors to write recommendations on your behalf.

Treat these documents as professional communications. Address the recipient politely; state your question, problem, or request clearly; and use a formal, respectful tone. Doing so helps you make a positive impression and get a quicker response.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

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

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1.2: Your Role as a Learner

Learning Objectives

- Use strategies for managing time effectively as a college student.
- Understand and apply strategies for taking notes efficiently.
- Determine the specific time-management, study, and note-taking strategies that work best for you individually.

By now, you have a general idea of what to expect from your college courses. You have probably received course syllabi, started on your first few assignments, and begun applying the strategies you learned about in the previous section.

At the beginning of the semester, your work load is relatively light. This is the perfect time to brush up on your study skills and establish good habits. When the demands on your time and energy become more intense, you will have a system in place for handling them.

This section covers specific strategies for managing your time effectively. You will also learn about different note-taking systems that you can use to organize and record information efficiently.

As you work through this section, remember that every student is different. The strategies presented here are tried and true techniques that work well for many people. However, you may need to adapt them slightly to develop a system that works well for you personally. If your friend swears by her smartphone, but you hate having to carry extra electronic gadgets around, then using a smartphone will not be the best organizational strategy for you.

Read with an open mind, and consider what techniques have been effective (or ineffective) for you in the past. Which habits from your high school years or your work life could help you succeed in college? Which habits might get in your way? What changes might you need to make?

Understanding Yourself as a Learner

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

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

Learning Styles

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

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

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

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

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

Your learning style does not completely define you as a student. Auditory learners can comprehend a flow chart, and kinesthetic learners can sit still long enough to read a book. However, if you do have one dominant learning style, you can work with it to get the most out of your classes and study time. Table 1 lists some tips for maximizing your learning style.

Table 1 - Learning Style Strategies

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

tip

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

Time Management

In college you have increased freedom to structure your time as you please. With that freedom comes increased responsibility. High school teachers often take it upon themselves to track down students who miss class or forget assignments. College instructors, however, expect you to take full responsibility for managing yourself and getting your work done on time.

Getting Started: Short- and Long-Term Planning

At the beginning of the semester, establish a weekly routine for when you will study and write. A general guideline is that for every hour spent in class, students should expect to spend another two to three hours on reading, writing, and studying for tests. Therefore, if you are taking a biology course that meets three times a week for an hour at a time, you can expect to spend six to nine hours per week on it outside of class. You will need to budget time for each class just like an employer schedules shifts at work, and you must make that study time a priority.

That may sound like a lot when taking multiple classes, but if you plan your time carefully, it is manageable. A typical full-time schedule of fifteen credit hours translates into thirty to forty-five hours per week spent on schoolwork outside of class. All in all, a

full-time student would spend about as much time on school each week as an employee spends on work. Balancing school and a job can be more challenging, but still doable.

In addition to setting aside regular work periods, you will need to plan ahead to handle more intense demands, such as studying for exams and writing major papers. At the beginning of the semester, go through your course syllabi and mark all major due dates and exam dates on a calendar. Use a format that you check regularly, such as your smartphone or the calendar feature in your e-mail.

tip

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

Crystal knew that to balance a job, college classes, and a family, it was crucial for her to get organized. For the month of September, she drew up a week-by-week calendar that listed not only her own class and work schedules but also the days her son attended preschool and the days her husband had off from work. She and her husband discussed how to share their day-to-day household responsibilities so she would be able to get her schoolwork done. Crystal also made a note to talk to her supervisor at work about reducing her hours during finals week in December.

? Exercise 1.2.1

Now that you have learned some time-management basics, it is time to apply those skills. For this exercise, you will develop a weekly schedule and a semester calendar.

1. Working with your class schedule, map out a week-long schedule of study time. Try to apply the “two- to three-hour” rule. Be sure to include any other nonnegotiable responsibilities, such as a job or child care duties.
2. Use your course syllabi to record exam dates and due dates for major assignments in a calendar (paper or electronic). Use a star, highlighting, or other special marking to set off any days or weeks that look especially demanding.

Staying Consistent: Time Management Dos and Don’ts

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

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

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

Dos

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

7. Have a plan for handling high-stress periods, such as final exam week. Try to reduce your other commitments during those periods—for instance, by scheduling time off from your job. Build in some time for relaxing activities, too.

Don’ts

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

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1.3: What is an Essay?

If you were asked to describe an essay in one word, what would that one word be?

Figure **1.3.1**

Okay, well, in one word, an essay is an **idea.**

No idea; no essay.

But more than that, the best essays have *original and insightful* ideas.

Okay, so the first thing we need to begin an essay is an *insightful idea* that we wish to share with the reader.

But original and insightful ideas do not just pop up every day. Where does one find original and insightful ideas?

Let's start here: an idea is an *insight* gained from either a) our personal experiences, or b) in scholarship, from synthesizing the ideas of others to create a new idea.

In this class (except for the last essay) we write **personal essays**; therefore, we will focus mostly on a) *personal experience* as a source for our ideas.

Life teaches us lessons. We learn from our life experiences. This is how we grow as human beings. So before you start on your essays, reflect on your life experiences by employing one or more of the brainstorming strategies described in this course. Your brainstorming and prewriting assignments are important assignments because remember: *no idea; no essay*. Brainstorming can help you discover an *idea* for your essay. So, ask yourself: What lessons have I learned? What insights have I gained that I can write about and share with my reader? Your reader can learn from you.

Why do we write?

We write to improve our world; it's that simple. We write personal essays to address the most problematic and fundamental question of all: What does it mean to be a human being? By sharing the insights and lessons we have learned from our life experiences we can add to our community's collective wisdom.

We respect the writings of experts. And, guess what; you are an expert! You are the best expert of all on one subject—*your own life experiences*. So when we write personal essays, we research our own life experiences and describe those experiences with rich and compelling language to convince our reader that our idea is valid.

For example:

For your *Narrative* essay: do more than simply relate a series of events. Let the events make a point about the central *idea* you are trying to teach us.

For your *Example* essay: do more than tell us about your experience. *Show* us your experience. *Describe* your examples in descriptive details so that your reader actually experiences for themselves the central *idea* you wish to teach them.

For the *Comparison Contrast* essay: do more than simply tell us about the differences and similarities of two things. *Evaluate* those differences and similarities and draw an *idea* about them, so that you can offer your reader some basic insight into the comparison.

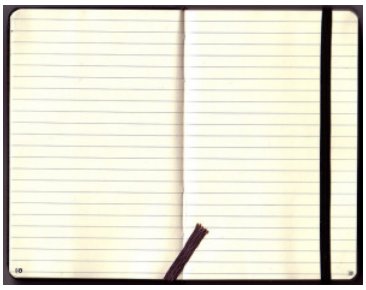

Figure **1.3.2**

Okay, one last comment. Often students say to me: “I am so young; I do not have any meaningful insights in to life.” Okay, well, you may not be able to solve the pressing issues of the day, but think of it this way. What if a younger brother or sister came to you and in an anxious voice said; “I’ve got to do X. I’ve never had to do X. You’ve had some experience with X. Can you give me some advice?” You may have some wisdom and insights from your own life experience with X to share with that person. Don’t worry about solving the BIG issues in this class. You can serve the world as well by simply addressing, and bringing to life in words, the problems and life situations that you know best, no matter how mundane. Please notice that with rare exception the essays you will read in this class do *not* cite outside sources. They are all written from the author’s actual life experiences. So think of your audience as someone who can learn from your life experiences and write to them and for them.

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1.4: Defining the Writing Process

Figure 1.4.1

On the surface, nothing could be simpler than writing: You sit down, you pick up a pen or open a document on your computer, and you write words. But anyone who has procrastinated or struggled with writer's block knows that the writing process is more arduous, if not somewhat mysterious and unpredictable.

People often think of writing in terms of its end product—the email, the report, the memo, essay, or research paper, all of which result from the time and effort spent in the act of writing. In this course, however, you will be introduced to writing as the recursive process of planning, drafting, and revising.

Writing is Recursive

You will focus as much on the process of writing as you will on its end product (the writing you normally submit for feedback or a grade). *Recursive* means circling back; and, more often than not, the writing process will have you running in circles. You might be in the middle of your draft when you realize you need to do more brainstorming, so you return to the planning stage. Even when you have finished a draft, you may find changes you want to make to an introduction. In truth, every writer must develop his or her own process for getting the writing done, but there are some basic strategies and techniques you can adapt to make your work a little easier, more fulfilling and effective.

Developing Your Writing Process

The final product of a piece of writing is undeniably important, but the emphasis of this course is on developing a writing process that works for you. Some of you may already know what strategies and techniques assist you in your writing. You may already be familiar with prewriting techniques, such as freewriting, clustering, and listing. You may already have a regular writing practice. But the rest of you may need to discover what works through trial and error. Developing individual strategies and techniques that promote painless and compelling writing can take some time. So, be patient.

A Writer's Process: Ali Hale

Read and examine ***The Writing Process*** by Ali Hale. Think of this document as a framework for defining the process in distinct stages: Prewriting, Writing, Revising, Editing, and Publishing. You may already be familiar with these terms. You may recall from past experiences that some resources refer to prewriting as planning and some texts refer to writing as drafting.

What is important to grasp early on is that the act of writing is more than sitting down and writing something. Please avoid the "one and done" attitude, something instructors see all too often in undergraduate writing courses. Use Hale's essay as your starting point for defining your own process.

A Writer's Process: Anne Lamott

In the video below, Anne Lamott, a writer of both non-fiction and fiction works, as well as the instructional novel on writing **Bird by Bird: Instructions on Writing**, discusses her own journey as a writer, including the obstacles she has to overcome every time she sits down to begin her creative process. She will refer to terms such as "the down draft," "the up draft," and "the dental draft."

As you watch, think about how her terms, "down draft," "up draft," "dental draft," work with those presented by Hale's ***The Writing Process***. What does Lamott mean by these terms? Can you identify with her process or with the one Hale describes? How are they related?

Also, when viewing the interview, pay careful attention to the following timeframe: 11:23 to 27:27 minutes and make a list of tips and strategies you find particularly helpful. Think about how your own writing process fits with what Hale and Lamott have to say. Is yours similar? Different? Is there any new information you have learned that you did not know before exposure to these works?

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1.5: Videos- Prewriting Techniques

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a technique of listing as many ideas as possible about your writing topic. The greatest rule of brainstorming is to keep the process as broad and open as possible. This video suggests several things that you DON'T want to do.

Mindmapping

Mindmapping is similar to brainstorming, but it is much more visual. It allows you to create connections between ideas. It can be a useful step after brainstorming, or it may match your style better if brainstorming seems too random. This video provides a good overview:

Freewriting

Freewriting is a process of simply writing. It helps you get started and can expand your thinking. Watch this video to learn more about this technique:

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1.6: Audience

What this handout is about

This handout will help you understand and write for the appropriate audience when you write an academic essay.

Audience matters

When you're in the process of writing a paper, it's easy to forget that you are actually writing to someone. Whether you've thought about it consciously or not, you always write to an audience: sometimes your audience is a very generalized group of readers, sometimes you know the individuals who compose the audience, and sometimes you write for yourself. Keeping your audience in mind while you write can help you make good decisions about what material to include, how to organize your ideas, and how best to support your argument.

To illustrate the impact of audience, imagine you're writing a letter to your grandmother to tell her about your first month of college. What details and stories might you include? What might you leave out? Now imagine that you're writing on the same topic but your audience is your best friend. Unless you have an extremely cool grandma to whom you're very close, it's likely that your two letters would look quite different in terms of content, structure, and even tone.

Isn't my instructor my audience?

Yes, your instructor or TA is probably the actual audience for your paper. Your instructors read and grade your essays, and you want to keep their needs and perspectives in mind when you write. However, when you write an essay with only your instructor in mind, you might not say as much as you should or say it as clearly as you should, because you assume that the person grading it knows more than you do and will fill in the gaps. This leaves it up to the instructor to decide what you are really saying, and she might decide differently than you expect. For example, she might decide that those gaps show that you don't know and understand the material. Remember that time when you said to yourself, "I don't have to explain communism; my instructor knows more about that than I do" and got back a paper that said something like "Shows no understanding of communism"? That's an example of what can go awry when you think of your instructor as your only audience.

Thinking about your audience differently can improve your writing, especially in terms of how clearly you express your argument. The clearer your points are, the more likely you are to have a strong essay. Your instructor will say, "He really understands communism—he's able to explain it simply and clearly!" By treating your instructor as an intelligent but uninformed audience, you end up addressing her more effectively.

How do I identify my audience and what they want from me?

Before you even begin the process of writing, take some time to consider who your audience is and what they want from you. Use the following questions to help you identify your audience and what you can do to address their wants and needs.

- Who is your audience?
- Might you have more than one audience? If so, how many audiences do you have? List them.
- Does your assignment itself give any clues about your audience?
- What does your audience need? What do they want? What do they value?
- What is most important to them?
- What are they least likely to care about?
- What kind of organization would best help your audience understand and appreciate your? What do you have to say (or what are you doing in your research) that might surprise your audience?
- What do you want your audience to think, learn, or assume about you? What impression do you want your writing or your research to convey?

How much should I explain?

This is the hard part. As we said earlier, you want to show your instructor that you know the material. But different assignments call for varying degrees of information. Different fields also have different expectations. For more about what each field tends to expect from an essay, see the Writing Center handouts on writing in specific fields of study. The best place to start figuring out how much

you should say about each part of your paper is in a careful reading of the assignment. We give you some tips for reading assignments and figuring them out in our handout on how to read an assignment. The assignment may specify an audience for your paper; sometimes the instructor will ask you to imagine that you are writing to your congressperson, for a professional journal, to a group of specialists in a particular field, or for a group of your peers. If the assignment doesn't specify an audience, you may find it most useful to imagine your classmates reading the paper, rather than your instructor.

Now, knowing your imaginary audience, what other clues can you get from the assignment? If the assignment asks you to summarize something that you have read, then your reader wants you to include more examples from the text than if the assignment asks you to interpret the passage. Most assignments in college focus on argument rather than the repetition of learned information, so your reader probably doesn't want a lengthy, detailed, point-by-point summary of your reading (book reports in some classes and argument reconstructions in philosophy classes are big exceptions to this rule). If your assignment asks you to interpret or analyze the text (or an event or idea), then you want to make sure that your explanation of the material is focused and not so detailed that you end up spending more time on examples than on your analysis. If you are not sure about the difference between explaining something and analyzing it, see our handouts on reading the assignment and argument.

Once you have a draft, try your level of explanation out on a friend, a classmate, or a Writing Center tutor. Get the person to read your rough draft, and then ask her to talk to you about what she did and didn't understand. (Now is not the time to talk about proofreading stuff, so make sure she ignores those issues for the time being). You will likely get one of the following responses or a combination of them:

- If your listener/reader has **tons of questions** about what you are saying, then you probably need to explain more. Let's say you are writing a paper on piranhas, and your reader says, "What's a piranha? Why do I need to know about them? How would I identify one?" Those are vital questions that you clearly need to answer in your paper. You need more detail and elaboration.
- If your reader seems **confused**, you probably need to explain more clearly. So if he says, "Are there piranhas in the lakes around here?" you may not need to give more examples, but rather focus on making sure your examples and points are clear.
- If your reader **looks bored and can repeat back to you more details than she needs to know** to get your point, you probably explained too much. Excessive detail can also be confusing, because it can bog the reader down and keep her from focusing on your main points. You want your reader to say, "So it seems like your paper is saying that piranhas are misunderstood creatures that are essential to South American ecosystems," not, "Uh… piranhas are important?" or, "Well, I know you said piranhas don't usually attack people, and they're usually around 10 inches long, and some people keep them in aquariums as pets, and dolphins are one of their predators, and…a bunch of other stuff, I guess?"

Sometimes it's not the amount of explanation that matters, but the word choice and tone you adopt. Your word choice and tone need to match your audience's expectations. For example, imagine you are researching piranhas; you find an article in *National Geographic* and another one in an academic journal for scientists. How would you expect the two articles to sound? *National Geographic* is written for a popular audience; you might expect it to have sentences like "The piranha generally lives in shallow rivers and streams in South America." The scientific journal, on the other hand, might use much more technical language, because it's written for an audience of specialists. A sentence like "*Serrasalmus piraya* lives in fresh and brackish intercoastal and proto-arboreal sub-tropical regions between the 45th and 38th parallels" might not be out of place in the journal.

Generally, you want your reader to know enough material to understand the points you are making. It's like the old forest/trees metaphor. If you give the reader nothing but trees, she won't see the forest (your thesis, the reason for your paper). If you give her a big forest and no trees, she won't know how you got to the forest (she might say, "Your point is fine, but you haven't proven it to me"). You want the reader to say, "Nice forest, and those trees really help me to see it." Our handout on paragraph development can help you find a good balance of examples and explanation.

Reading your own drafts

Writers tend to read over their own papers pretty quickly, with the knowledge of what they are trying to argue already in their minds. Reading in this way can cause you to skip over gaps in your written argument because the gap-filler is in your head. A problem occurs when your reader falls into these gaps. Your reader wants you to make the necessary connections from one thought or sentence to the next. When you don't, the reader can become confused or frustrated. Think about when you read something and you struggle to find the most important points or what the writer is trying to say. Isn't that annoying? Doesn't it make you want to quit reading and surf the web or call a friend?

Putting yourself in the reader's position

Instead of reading your draft as if you wrote it and know what you meant, try reading it as if you have no previous knowledge of the material. Have you explained enough? Are the connections clear? This can be hard to do at first. Consider using one of the following strategies:

- Take a break from your work—go work out, take a nap, take a day off. This is why the Writing Center and your instructors encourage you to start writing more than a day before the paper is due. If you write the paper the night before it's due, you make it almost impossible to read the paper with a fresh eye.
- Try outlining after writing—after you have a draft, look at each paragraph separately. Write down the main point for each paragraph on a separate sheet of paper, in the order you have put them. Then look at your "outline"—does it reflect what you meant to say, in a logical order? Are some paragraphs hard to reduce to one point? Why? This technique will help you find places where you may have confused your reader by straying from your original plan for the paper.
- Read the paper aloud—we do this all the time at the Writing Center, and once you get used to it, you'll see that it helps you slow down and really consider how your reader experiences your text. It will also help you catch a lot of sentence-level errors, such as misspellings and missing words, which can make it difficult for your reader to focus on your argument.

These techniques can help you read your paper in the same way your reader will and make revisions that help your reader understand your argument. Then, when your instructor finally reads your finished draft, he or she won't have to fill in any gaps. The more work you do, the less work your audience will have to do—and the more likely it is that your instructor will follow and understand your argument.

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1.7: Thesis Statements

What this handout is about

This handout describes what a thesis statement is, how thesis statements work in your writing, and how you can discover or refine one for your draft.

Introduction

Writing in college often takes the form of persuasion—convincing others that you have an interesting, logical point of view on the subject you are studying. Persuasion is a skill you practice regularly in your daily life. You persuade your roommate to clean up, your parents to let you borrow the car, your friend to vote for your favorite candidate or policy. In college, course assignments often ask you to make a persuasive case in writing. You are asked to convince your reader of your point of view. This form of persuasion, often called academic argument, follows a predictable pattern in writing. After a brief introduction of your topic, you state your point of view on the topic directly and often in one sentence. This sentence is the thesis statement, and it serves as a summary of the argument you'll make in the rest of your paper .

What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement:

- tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion.
- is a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper.
- directly answers the question asked of you. A thesis is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself. The subject, or topic, of an essay might be World War II or Moby Dick; a thesis must then offer a way to understand the war or the novel.
- makes a claim that others might dispute.
- is usually a single sentence somewhere in your first paragraph that presents your argument to the reader. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will persuade the reader of the logic of your interpretation.

If your assignment asks you to take a position or develop a claim about a subject, you may need to convey that position or claim in a thesis statement near the beginning of your draft. The assignment may not explicitly state that you need a thesis statement because your instructor may assume you will include one. When in doubt, ask your instructor if the assignment requires a thesis statement. When an assignment asks you to analyze, to interpret, to compare and contrast, to demonstrate cause and effect, or to take a stand on an issue, it is likely that you are being asked to develop a thesis and to support it persuasively. (Check out our handout on **understanding assignments** for more information.)

How do I get a thesis?

A thesis is the result of a lengthy thinking process. Formulating a thesis is not the first thing you do after reading an essay assignment. Before you develop an argument on any topic, you have to collect and organize evidence, look for possible relationships between known facts (such as surprising contrasts or similarities), and think about the significance of these relationships. Once you do this thinking, you will probably have a "working thesis," a basic or main idea, an argument that you think you can support with evidence but that may need adjustment along the way.

Writers use all kinds of techniques to stimulate their thinking and to help them clarify relationships or comprehend the broader significance of a topic and arrive at a thesis statement. For more ideas on how to get started, see our handout on **brainstorming**.

How do I know if my thesis is strong?

If there's time, run it by your instructor or make an appointment at the Writing Center to get some feedback. Even if you do not have time to get advice elsewhere, you can do some thesis evaluation of your own. When reviewing your first draft and its working thesis, ask yourself the following:

- *Do I answer the question?* Re-reading the question prompt after constructing a working thesis can help you fix an argument that misses the focus of the question.

- *Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?*If your thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it's possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.
- Is my thesis statement specific enough?

Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like "good" or "successful," see if you could be more specific: *why* is something "good"; *what specifically* makes something "successful"?

- *Does my thesis pass the "So what?" test?* If a reader's first response is, "So what?" then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.
- *Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering?* If your thesis and the body of your essay do not seem to go together, one of them has to change. It's o.k. to change your working thesis to reflect things you have figured out in the course of writing your paper. Remember, always reassess and revise your writing as necessary.
- *Does my thesis pass the "how and why?" test?* If a reader's first response is "how?" or "why?" your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader. See what you can add to give the reader a better take on your position right from the beginning.

Examples

Suppose you are taking a course on 19th-century America, and the instructor hands out the following essay assignment: Compare and contrast the reasons why the North and South fought the Civil War. You turn on the computer and type out the following:

The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some of which were the same and some different.

This weak thesis restates the question without providing any additional information. You will expand on this new information in the body of the essay, but it is important that the reader know where you are heading. A reader of this weak thesis might think, "What reasons? How are they the same? How are they different?" Ask yourself these same questions and begin to compare Northern and Southern attitudes (perhaps you first think, "The South believed slavery was right, and the North thought slavery was wrong"). Now, push your comparison toward an interpretation—why did one side think slavery was right and the other side think it was wrong? You look again at the evidence, and you decide that you are going to argue that the North believed slavery was immoral while the South believed it upheld the Southern way of life. You write:

While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons while the South fought to preserve its own institutions.

Now you have a working thesis! Included in this working thesis is a reason for the war and some idea of how the two sides disagreed over this reason. As you write the essay, you will probably begin to characterize these differences more precisely, and your working thesis may start to seem too vague. Maybe you decide that both sides fought for moral reasons, and that they just focused on different moral issues. You end up revising the working thesis into a final thesis that really captures the argument in your paper:

While both Northerners and Southerners believed they fought against tyranny and oppression, Northerners focused on the oppression of slaves while Southerners defended their own right to self-government.

Compare this to the original weak thesis. This final thesis presents a way of *interpreting* evidence that illuminates the significance of the question. *Keep in mind that this is one of many possible interpretations of the Civil War—it is not the one and only right answer to the question*. There isn't one right answer; there are only strong and weak thesis statements and strong and weak uses of evidence.

Let's look at another example. Suppose your literature professor hands out the following assignment in a class on the American novel: Write an analysis of some aspect of Mark Twain's novel Huckleberry Finn. "This will be easy," you think. "I loved Huckleberry Finn!" You grab a pad of paper and write:

Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn is a great American novel.

Why is this thesis weak? Think about what the reader would expect from the essay that follows: you will most likely provide a general, appreciative summary of Twain's novel. The question did not ask you to summarize; it asked you to analyze. Your professor is probably not interested in your opinion of the novel; instead, she wants you to think about *why* it's such a great novel—what do Huck's adventures tell us about life, about America, about coming of age, about race relations, etc.? First, the question asks

you to pick an aspect of the novel that you think is important to its structure or meaning—for example, the role of storytelling, the contrasting scenes between the shore and the river, or the relationships between adults and children. Now you write:

In Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain develops a contrast between life on the river and life on the shore.

Here's a working thesis with potential: you have highlighted an important aspect of the novel for investigation; however, it's still not clear what your analysis will reveal. Your reader is intrigued, but is still thinking, "So what? What's the point of this contrast? What does it signify?" Perhaps you are not sure yet, either. That's fine—begin to work on comparing scenes from the book and see what you discover. Free write, make lists, jot down Huck's actions and reactions. Eventually you will be able to clarify for yourself, and then for the reader, why this contrast matters. After examining the evidence and considering your own insights, you write:

Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave "civilized" society and go back to nature.

This final thesis statement presents an interpretation of a literary work based on an analysis of its content. Of course, for the essay itself to be successful, you must now present evidence from the novel that will convince the reader of your interpretation.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the **UNC Libraries citation tutorial**.

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1.8: Organizing an Essay

There are many elements that must come together to create a good essay. The topic should be clear and interesting. The author's voice should come through, but not be a distraction. There should be no errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or capitalization. Organization is one of the most important elements of an essay that is often overlooked. An organized essay is clear, focused, logical and effective.

Organization makes it easier to understand the thesis. To illustrate, imagine putting together a bike. Having all of the necessary tools, parts, and directions will make the job easier to complete than if the parts are spread across the room and the tools are located all over the house. The same logic applies to writing an essay. When all the parts of an essay are in some sort of order, it is both easier for the writer to put the essay together and for the reader to understand the main ideas presented in the essay.

Figure **1.8.1**

Although organization makes tasks easier to complete, there is not just one way of organizing. For example, there are hundreds of ways to organize a kitchen. The glasses can go in the cupboard to the right of the sink or to the left of it. The silverware can be placed in any number of drawers. Pots and pans can be hung on hooks over the island in the center of the kitchen or hidden in cupboard space beneath the counter. It does not matter as much where these items are placed, but that they are organized in a logical manner. Essays, like kitchens, can also be organized in different ways. There are three common strategies; however, it is important to note that these are broad categories. Variations of these strategies can be used, and they may be combined with one another.[1]

Strategy 1. Reverse Outlining

If your paper is about Huckleberry Finn, a working thesis might be: "In Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain develops a contrast between life on the river and life on the shore." However, you might feel uncertain if your paper really follows through on the thesis as promised.

This paper may benefit from reverse outlining. Your aim is to create an outline of what you've already written, as opposed to the kind of outline that you make before you begin to write. The reverse outline will help you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of both your organization and your argument.

Read the draft and take notes

Read your draft over, and as you do so, make very brief notes in the margin about what each paragraph is trying to accomplish.

Outline the Draft

After you've read through the entire draft, transfer the brief notes to a fresh sheet of paper, listing them in the order in which they appear. The outline might look like this:

- Paragraph 1: Intro
- Paragraph 2: Background on Huck Finn
- Paragraph 3: River for Huck and Jim
- Paragraph 4: Shore and laws for Huck and Jim
- Paragraph 5: Shore and family, school
- Paragraph 6: River and freedom, democracy
- Paragraph 7: River and shore similarities
- Paragraph 8: Conclusion

Examine the Outline

Look for repetition and other organizational problems. In the reverse outline above, there's a problem somewhere in Paragraphs 3-7, where the potential for repetition is high because you keep moving back and forth between river and shore.

Re-examine the Thesis, the Outline, and the Draft Together

Look closely at the outline and see how well it supports the argument in your thesis statement. You should be able to see which paragraphs need rewriting, reordering or rejecting. You may find some paragraphs are tangential or irrelevant or that some paragraphs have more than one idea and need to be separated.

Strategy 2. Talk It Out

Figure **1.8.2**

If your paper is about President Roosevelt's New Deal, and your working thesis is: "The New Deal was actually a conservative defense of American capitalism." This strategy forces to explain your thinking to someone else.

Find a Friend, your T.A., your Professor, a relative, a Writing Center tutor, or any sympathetic and intelligent listener.

People are more accustomed to talking than writing, so it might be beneficial to explain your thinking out loud to someone before organizing the essay. Talking to someone about your ideas may also relieve pressure and anxiety about your topic.

Explain What Your Paper Is About

Pay attention to how you explain your argument verbally. It is likely that the order in which you present your ideas and evidence to your listener is a logical way to arrange them in your paper. Let's say that you begin (as you did above) with the working thesis. As you continue to explain, you realize that even though your draft doesn't mention "private enterprise" until the last two paragraphs, you begin to talk about it right away. This fact should tell you that you probably need to discuss private enterprise near the beginning.

Take Notes

You and your listener should keep track of the way you explain your paper. If you don't, you probably won't remember what you've talked about. Compare the structure of the argument in the notes to the structure of the draft you've written.

Get Your Listener to Ask Questions

As the writer, it is in your interest to receive constructive criticism so that your draft will become stronger. You want your listener to say things like, "Would you mind explaining that point about being both conservative and liberal again? I wasn't sure I followed" or "What kind of economic principle is government relief? Do you consider it a good or bad thing?" Questions you can't answer may signal an unnecessary tangent or an area needing further development in the draft. Questions you need to think about will probably make you realize that you need to explain more your paper. In short, you want to know if your listener fully understands you; if not, chances are your readers won't, either.[2]

Strategy 3. Paragraphs

Readers need paragraph breaks in order to organize their reading. Writers need paragraph breaks to organize their writing. A paragraph break indicates a change in focus, topic, specificity, point of view, or rhetorical strategy. The paragraph should have one main idea; the topic sentence expresses this idea. The paragraph should be organized either spatially, chronologically, or logically. The movement may be from general to specific, specific to general, or general to specific to general. All paragraphs must contain developed ideas: comparisons, examples, explanations, definitions, causes, effects, processes, or descriptions. There are several concluding strategies which may be combined or used singly, depending on the assignment's length and purpose:

- a summary of the main points
- a hook and return to the introductory "attention-getter" to frame the essay
- a web conclusion which relates the topic to a larger context of a greater significance
- a proposal calling for action or further examination of the topic

- a question which provokes the reader
- a quote
- a vivid image or compelling narrative[3]

Put Paragraphs into Sections

You should be able to group your paragraphs so that they make a particular point or argument that supports your thesis. If any paragraph, besides the introduction or conclusion, cannot fit into any section, you may have to ask yourself whether it belongs in the essay.

Re-examine each Section

Assuming you have more than one paragraph under each section, try to distinguish between them. Perhaps you have two arguments in favor of that can be distinguished from each other by author, logic, ethical principles invoked, etc. Write down the distinctions — they will help you formulate clear topic sentences.

Re-examine the Entire Argument

Which section do you want to appear first? Why? Which Second? Why? In what order should the paragraphs appear in each section? Look for an order that makes the strongest possible argument.[4]

References

1. Organizing an Essay ↵
2. Reorganizing Your Draft ↵
3. Parts of an Essay ↵
4. Reorganizing Your Draft ↵

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1.9: Creating Paragraphs

A paragraph is a self-contained portion of your argument. Paragraphs will begin by making a claim that connects back to your thesis. The body of the paragraph will present the evidence, reasoning and conclusions that prove that claim. Usually, paragraphs will end by connecting their claim to the larger argument or by setting up the claim that the next paragraph will contain.

How Many Paragraphs Do You Need?

There is no set number for how many paragraphs a paper should have. You will need one for an introduction and one for a conclusion, but after that the number can vary. However, you will need one paragraph for every claim that makes up your argument.

Paragraphs should be used to develop one idea at a time rather than contain many different ideas and claims. If you have a lot of ideas and claims to address, you may be tempted to combine related claims into the same paragraph. Combining different points in the same paragraph cuts down on how much space you have to argue each point. This will divide your reader's attention and make your argument less thorough.

By dedicating each paragraph to only one part of your argument, you will give the reader time to fully evaluate and understand each claim before going on to the next one. Think of paragraphs as a way of guiding your reader's attention – by giving them a single topic, you force them to focus on it. When you direct their focus, they will have a much easier time following your argument.

Some writing manuals will direct you to have one paragraph for every point made in your thesis. The general idea behind this rule is a good one – you need to address every point, and you will need at least a paragraph for each. However, do not feel like you can only devote one paragraph to each point. If your argument is complex, you may need to have subsections for each of your main points. Each one of those supporting points should be its own paragraph.

Using Topic Sentences

Every paragraph of argument should begin with a topic sentence that tells the reader what the paragraph will prove. By providing the reader with expectations at the start of the paragraph, you help them understand where you are going and how the paragraph fits in with the overall structure of your argument. Topic sentences should always connect back to your thesis statement – if you cannot find a way to describe a paragraph in relation to your thesis, you probably do not need it for your argument.

Creating Good Paragraphs

If the thesis contains multiple points or assertions, each body paragraph should support or justify them, preferably in the order the assertions were originally stated in the thesis. Thus, the topic sentence for the first body paragraph will refer to the first point in the thesis sentence and the topic sentence for the second body paragraph will refer to the second point in the thesis sentence. Each body paragraph is something like a miniature essay in that they each need an introductory sentence that makes an important and interesting argument, and that they each need a good closing sentence in order to produce a smooth transition between one point and the next. Transitions from one argument to the next, as well as within paragraphs, are important to add coherence to your paper.

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1.10: Paragraphs

What this handout is about

This handout will help you understand how paragraphs are formed, how to develop stronger paragraphs, and how to completely and clearly express your ideas.

What is a paragraph?

Paragraphs are the building blocks of papers. Many students define paragraphs in terms of length: a paragraph is a group of at least five sentences, a paragraph is half a page long, etc. In reality, though, the unity and coherence of ideas among sentences is what constitutes a paragraph. A paragraph is defined as "a group of sentences or a single sentence that forms a unit" (Lunsford and Connors 116). Length and appearance do not determine whether a section in a paper is a paragraph. For instance, in some styles of writing, particularly journalistic styles, a paragraph can be just one sentence long. Ultimately, a paragraph is a sentence or group of sentences that support one main idea. In this handout, we will refer to this as the "controlling idea," because it controls what happens in the rest of the paragraph.

How do I decide what to put in a paragraph?

Before you can begin to determine what the composition of a particular paragraph will be, you must first decide on a working thesis for your paper. What is the most important idea that you are trying to convey to your reader? The information in each paragraph must be related to that idea. In other words, your paragraphs should remind your reader that there is a recurrent relationship between your thesis and the information in each paragraph. A working thesis functions like a seed from which your paper, and your ideas, will grow. The whole process is an organic one—a natural progression from a seed to a full-blown paper where there are direct, familial relationships between all of the ideas in the paper.

The decision about what to put into your paragraphs begins with the germination of a seed of ideas; this "germination process" is better known as brainstorming. There are many techniques for brainstorming; whichever one you choose, this stage of paragraph development cannot be skipped. Building paragraphs can be like building a skyscraper: there must be a well-planned foundation that supports what you are building. Any cracks, inconsistencies, or other corruptions of the foundation can cause your whole paper to crumble.

So, let's suppose that you have done some brainstorming to develop your thesis. What else should you keep in mind as you begin to create paragraphs? Every paragraph in a paper should be

- **Unified**—All of the sentences in a single paragraph should be related to a single controlling idea (often expressed in the topic sentence of the paragraph).
- **Clearly related to the thesis**—The sentences should all refer to the central idea, or thesis, of the paper (Rosen and Behrens 119).
- **Coherent**—The sentences should be arranged in a logical manner and should follow a definite plan for development (Rosen and Behrens 119).
- **Well-developed**—Every idea discussed in the paragraph should be adequately explained and supported through evidence and details that work together to explain the paragraph's controlling idea (Rosen and Behrens 119).

How do I organize a paragraph?

There are many different ways to organize a paragraph. The organization you choose will depend on the controlling idea of the paragraph. Below are a few possibilities for organization, with brief examples.

- **Narration:** Tell a story. Go chronologically, from start to finish. (**See an example.**)
- **Description:** Provide specific details about what something looks, smells, tastes, sounds, or feels like. Organize spatially, in order of appearance, or by topic. (**See an example.**)
- **Process:** Explain how something works, step by step. Perhaps follow a sequence—first, second, third. (**See an example.**)
- **Classification:** Separate into groups or explain the various parts of a topic. (**See an example.**)

- **Illustration:** Give examples and explain how those examples prove your point. (See the detailed example in the next section of this handout.)

5-step process to paragraph development

Let's walk through a 5-step process to building a paragraph. Each step of the process will include an explanation of the step and a bit of "model" text to illustrate how the step works. Our finished model paragraph will be about slave spirituals, the original songs that African Americans created during slavery. The model paragraph uses illustration (giving examples) to prove its point.

Step 1. Decide on a controlling idea and create a topic sentence

Paragraph development begins with the formulation of the controlling idea. This idea directs the paragraph's development. Often, the controlling idea of a paragraph will appear in the form of a topic sentence. In some cases, you may need more than one sentence to express a paragraph's controlling idea. Here is the controlling idea for our "model paragraph," expressed in a topic sentence:

- **Model controlling idea and topic sentence**— *Slave spirituals often had hidden double meanings.*

Step 2. Explain the controlling idea

Paragraph development continues with an expression of the rationale or the explanation that the writer gives for how the reader should interpret the information presented in the idea statement or topic sentence of the paragraph. The writer explains his/her thinking about the main topic, idea, or focus of the paragraph. Here's the sentence that would follow the controlling idea about slave spirituals:

- **Model explanation**—*On one level, spirituals referenced heaven, Jesus, and the soul; but on another level, the songs spoke about slave resistance.*

Step 3. Give an example (or multiple examples)

Paragraph development progresses with the expression of some type of support or evidence for the idea and the explanation that came before it. The example serves as a sign or representation of the relationship established in the idea and explanation portions of the paragraph. Here are two examples that we could use to illustrate the double meanings in slave spirituals:

- **Model example A**— *For example, according to Frederick Douglass, the song "O Canaan, Sweet Canaan" spoke of slaves' longing for heaven, but it also expressed their desire to escape to the North. Careful listeners heard this second meaning in the following lyrics: "I don't expect to stay / Much longer here. / Run to Jesus, shun the danger. / I don't expect to stay."*
- **Model example B**— *Slaves even used songs like "Steal Away to Jesus (at midnight)" to announce to other slaves the time and place of secret, forbidden meetings.*

Step 4. Explain the example(s)

The next movement in paragraph development is an explanation of each example and its relevance to the topic sentence and rationale that were stated at the beginning of the paragraph. This explanation shows readers why you chose to use this/or these particular examples as evidence to support the major claim, or focus, in your paragraph.

Continue the pattern of giving examples and explaining them until all points/examples that the writer deems necessary have been made and explained. NONE of your examples should be left unexplained. You might be able to explain the relationship between the example and the topic sentence in the same sentence which introduced the example. More often, however, you will need to explain that relationship in a separate sentence. Look at these explanations for the two examples in the slave spirituals paragraph:

- **Model explanation for example A**— *When slaves sang this song, they could have been speaking of their departure from this life and their arrival in heaven; however, they also could have been describing their plans to leave the South and run, not to Jesus, but to the North.*
- **Model explanation for example B**—*[The relationship between example B and the main idea of the paragraph's controlling idea is clear enough without adding another sentence to explain it.]*

Step 5. Complete the paragraph's idea or transition into the next paragraph

The final movement in paragraph development involves tying up the loose ends of the paragraph and reminding the reader of the relevance of the information in this paragraph to the main or controlling idea of the paper. At this point, you can remind your reader

about the relevance of the information that you just discussed in the paragraph. You might feel more comfortable, however, simply transitioning your reader to the next development in the next paragraph. Here's an example of a sentence that completes the slave spirituals paragraph:

- **Model sentence for completing a paragraph**— *What whites heard as merely spiritual songs, slaves discerned as detailed messages. The hidden meanings in spirituals allowed slaves to sing what they could not say.*
- ***Notice that the example and explanation steps of this 5-step process (steps 3 and 4) can be repeated as needed. The idea is that you continue to use this pattern until you have completely developed the main idea of the paragraph.***

Here is a look at the completed "model" paragraph:

Slave spirituals often had hidden double meanings. On one level, spirituals referenced heaven, Jesus, and the soul, but on another level, the songs spoke about slave resistance. For example, according to Frederick Douglass, the song "O Canaan, Sweet Canaan" spoke of slaves' longing for heaven, but it also expressed their desire to escape to the North. Careful listeners heard this second meaning in the following lyrics: "I don't expect to stay / Much longer here. / Run to Jesus, shun the danger. / I don't expect to stay." When slaves sang this song, they could have been speaking of their departure from this life and their arrival in heaven; however, they also could have been describing their plans to leave the South and run, not to Jesus, but to the North. Slaves even used songs like "Steal Away to Jesus (at midnight)" to announce to other slaves the time and place of secret, forbidden meetings. What whites heard as merely spiritual songs, slaves discerned as detailed messages. The hidden meanings in spirituals allowed slaves to sing what they could not say.

Troubleshooting paragraphs

Problem 1: The paragraph has no topic sentence.

Imagine each paragraph as a sandwich. The real content of the sandwich—the meat or other filling—is in the middle. It includes all the evidence you need to make the point. But it gets kind of messy to eat a sandwich without any bread. Your readers don't know what to do with all the evidence you've given them. So, the top slice of bread (the first sentence of the paragraph) explains the topic (or controlling idea) of the paragraph. And, the bottom slice (the last sentence of the paragraph) tells the reader how the paragraph relates to the broader argument. In the original and revised paragraphs below, notice how a topic sentence expressing the controlling idea tells the reader the point of all the evidence.

Original paragraph

Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. If the fish are well-fed, they won't bite humans.

Revised paragraph

Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. If the fish are well-fed, they won't bite humans.

Once you have mastered the use of topic sentences, you may decide that the topic sentence for a particular paragraph really shouldn't be the first sentence of the paragraph. This is fine—the topic sentence can actually go at the beginning, middle, or end of a paragraph; what's important is that it is in there somewhere so that readers know what the main idea of the paragraph is and how it relates back to the thesis of your paper. Suppose that we wanted to start the piranha paragraph with a transition sentence—something that reminds the reader of what happened in the previous paragraph—rather than with the topic sentence. Let's suppose that the previous paragraph was about all kinds of animals that people are afraid of, like sharks, snakes, and spiders. Our paragraph might look like this (the topic sentence is underlined):

Like sharks, snakes, and spiders, pirahnas are widely feared. Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. If the fish are well-fed, they won't bite humans.

Problem 2: The paragraph has more than one controlling idea.

If a paragraph has more than one main idea, consider eliminating sentences that relate to the second idea, or split the paragraph into two or more paragraphs, each with only one main idea. In the following paragraph, the final two sentences branch off into a different topic; so, the revised paragraph eliminates them and concludes with a sentence that reminds the reader of the paragraph's main idea.

Original paragraph

Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. ~~*A number of South American groups eat piranhas. They fry or grill the fish and then serve them with coconut milk or tucupi, a sauce made from fermented manioc juices.*~~

Revised paragraph

Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. If the fish are well-fed, they won't bite humans.

Problem 3: Transitions are needed within the paragraph.

You are probably familiar with the idea that transitions may be needed between paragraphs or sections in a paper (see our handout on this subject). Sometimes they are also helpful within the body of a single paragraph. Within a paragraph, transitions are often single words or short phrases that help to establish relationships between ideas and to create a logical progression of those ideas in a paragraph. This is especially likely to be true within paragraphs that discuss multiple examples. Let's take a look at a version of our piranha paragraph that uses transitions to orient the reader:

Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, except in two main situations, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' instinct is to flee, not attack. But there are two situations in which a piranha bite is likely. The first is when a frightened piranha is lifted out of the water—for example, if it has been caught in a fishing net. The second is when the water level in pools where piranhas are living falls too low. A large number of fish may be trapped in a single pool, and if they are hungry, they may attack anything that enters the water.

In this example, you can see how the phrases "the first" and "the second" help the reader follow the organization of the ideas in the paragraph.

Works Consulted

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the **UNC Libraries citation tutorial**.

Lunsford, Andrea and Robert Collins. *The St. Martin's Handbook, Annotated Instructor's Edition*. 5th Ed. New York: St. Martin's, 2003.

Rosen, Leonard and Laurence Behrens. *The Allyn and Bacon Handbook, Annotated Instructor's Edition*. 4th Ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.

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1.11: Introductions

How to Write an Introduction

An introduction for an essay or research paper is the first paragraph, which explains the topic and prepares the reader for the rest of the work. Because it's responsible for both the reader's first impression and setting the stage for the rest of the work, the introduction paragraph is arguably the most important paragraph in the work.

Knowing how to write an introduction paragraph is a great skill, not just for writers, but for students and researchers as well. Here, we explain everything you need to know to write the best introduction, such as what to include and a step-by-step process, with some introduction paragraph examples.

What is an introduction?

Your introduction is a way of preparing your reader for your paper. As the first paragraph of your writing, it makes the first impression and sets the reader's expectations for tone, voice, and writing style. More importantly, your introduction provides the necessary background for your reader to understand your paper's purpose and key points.

The introduction is also a way to engage and captivate your reader. An interesting, thought-provoking, or generally entertaining introduction makes your reader excited to keep reading—and an eager reader is an attentive reader.

What to include in an introduction

Introductions generally follow the writing style of the author and the format for the type of paper—for example, opening with a joke is appropriate for some essays, but not research papers. However, no matter what your writing style is or what kind of paper you're writing, a good introduction includes at least three parts:

1. A hook to capture the reader's attention
2. Background for context
3. A clearly defined thesis statement or main point of your paper

How to write a hook

The hook refers to anything that grabs (or "hooks") your reader's attention and makes them interested. This could be a mystery, such as posing a question and only answering it at the end of your paper. Or it could be a shocking statistic, something that makes your reader rethink what they thought they knew and become curious for more information.

Hooks can be even more creative. Some papers start with an analogy or parable to present complicated topics in a way that someone with little experience can understand. Likewise, many writers opt to use personal anecdotes to show a more human side and spark an emotional connection with the reader.

When all else fails, you can use a poignant quote. If you're having trouble putting your thoughts into words, maybe one of the great minds from history has already said it well.

How to add background information

Not every paper requires background knowledge, but sometimes your reader needs to catch up or understand the context before you make your original points.

If you're writing about something factual, such as a scientific or historical paper, you may need to provide a small lesson on the basics. For example, if you're writing about the conflict between ancient Egypt and Nubia, you might want to establish the time period and where each party was located geographically.

Just don't give too much away in the introduction. In general, introductions should be short. If your topic requires extensive background to understand, it's best to dedicate a few paragraphs to this after the introduction.

How to write a thesis statement

Every good introduction needs a thesis statement, a sentence that plainly and concisely explains the main topic. Thesis statements are often just a brief summary of your entire paper, including your argument or point of view for personal essays. For example, if

your paper is about whether viewing violent cartoons impacts real-life violence, your thesis statement could be:

> *Despite the rhetoric and finger-pointing, no evidence has connected live-action role-play violence with real-world violence, but there is plenty of evidence for exoneration, as I explain here.*

Learning to write a good thesis statement is an essential writing skill, both in college and the world of work, so it's worth taking the time to learn. The rule of thumb for thesis statements is not to give everything away all at once. Thesis statements, and more broadly introductions, should be short and to the point, so save the details for the rest of the paper.

How to write an introduction paragraph in 6 steps

1. **Decide on the overall tone and formality of your paper**
   - Often what you're writing determines the style: The guidelines for how to write an introduction for a report are different from those for how to write an English essay introduction. Even the different types of essays have their own limitations; for example, slang might be acceptable for a personal essay, but not a serious argumentative essay.
   - Don't force yourself to write in a style that's uncomfortable to you. If you're not good at making jokes, you don't need to. As long as your writing is interesting and your points are clear, your readers won't mind.
2. **Write your thesis statement**
   - At the beginning of writing a paper, even before writing the research paper outline, you should know what your thesis is. If you haven't already, now is the time to put that thesis into words by writing your thesis statement.
   - Thesis statements are just one sentence, but they are usually the most important sentence in your entire work. When your thesis is clearly defined, your readers will often use it as an anchor to understand the rest of the writing.
   - The key to writing a good thesis statement is knowing what to ignore. Your thesis statement should be an overview, not an outline. Save the details, evidence, and personal opinions for the body of the paper.
   - If you're still having trouble, ask yourself how you'd explain this topic to a child. When you're forced to use small words and simplify complex ideas, your writing comes across more clearly and is easier to understand. This technique also helps you know which details are necessary up front and which can wait until later.
3. **Consider what background information your reader needs**
   - Don't take your own experience for granted. By this point in the writing process, you've probably already finished your research, which means you're somewhat of an expert on the topic. Think back to what it was like before you learned: What did you wish you had known then?
   - Even if your topic is abstract, such as an ethical debate, consider including some context on the debate itself. How long has the ethical debate been happening? Was there a specific event that started it? Information like this can help set the scene so your reader doesn't feel like they're missing something.
4. **Think of a good hook**
   - Writing a hook can be the most difficult part of writing an introduction because it calls for some creativity. While the rest of your paper might be presenting fact after fact, the hook in your introduction often requires creating something from nothing.
   - Luckily, there are already plenty of tried-and-true strategies for how to start an essay. If you're not feeling very creative, you can use a method that's already been proven effective.
   - Just remember that the best hooks create an emotional connection—which emotion is up to you and your topic.
5. **Write a rough draft of your introduction without pressure**
   - It's normal to clam up when writing a rough draft of your introduction. After all, the introduction always comes first, so it's the first thing you write when you finally begin.
   - As explained in our guide to writing a rough draft, the best advice is not to pressure yourself. It's OK to write something that's messy—that's what makes this draft rough. The idea here is to get words on paper that make your point. They don't have to be the perfect words; that's what revisions are for.
   - At the beginning, just worry about saying what needs to be said. Get down your hook and thesis statement, and background information if necessary, without worrying about how it sounds. You'll be able to fix the problems later.
6. **Revise your introduction after you've written your whole paper**

- We recommend finishing the first draft of your entire paper before revising the introduction. You may make some changes in your paper's structure when writing the first draft, and those changes should be reflected in the introduction.
- After the first draft, it's easier to focus on minutiae like word choice and sentence structure, not to mention finding spelling and grammar mistakes.

Introduction for an essay example

> *While other kids' memories of circuses are happy and fun, what I recall most from my first time at a circus was feeling sorry for the animals—I can still remember the sadness in their eyes. [HOOK] Although animal rights in the circus have come a long way, their treatment of animals even under the new laws is still cruelty plain and simple. [BACKGROUND] The way circuses abuse animals needs to be abolished immediately, and we need to entirely rethink the way we use animals for entertainment. [THESIS STATEMENT]*

Introduction for a research paper example

> *What would happen to humanity if everyone just stopped having babies? [HOOK] Although more endemic in some places than others, the global decline in birth rates has become a major issue since the end of the pandemic. [BACKGROUND] My research here shows not only that birth rates are declining all over the world, but also that unless the threats are addressed, these drastic declines will only get worse. [THESIS STATEMENT]*

Introduction FAQs

- **What is an introduction?**
  - An introduction is the first paragraph in an essay or research paper. It prepares the reader for what follows.
- **What's the purpose of an introduction?**
  - The goal of the introduction is to both provide the necessary context for the topic so the reader can follow along and also create an emotional connection so the reader wants to keep reading.
- **What should an introduction include?**
  - An introduction should include three things: a hook to interest the reader, some background on the topic so the reader

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1.12: Conclusions

Learn about the elements of a successful essay conclusion.

The conclusion is a very important part of your essay. Although it is sometimes treated as a roundup of all of the bits that didn't fit into the paper earlier, it deserves better treatment than that! It's the last thing the reader will see, so it tends to stick in the reader's memory. It's also a great place to remind the reader exactly why your topic is important. A conclusion is more than just "the last paragraph"—it's a working part of the paper. This is the place to push your reader to think about the consequences of your topic for the wider world or for the reader's own life!

A good conclusion should do a few things:

- Restate your **thesis**
- Synthesize or **summarize** your major points
- Make the context of your **argument** clear

Restating Your Thesis

You've already spent time and energy crafting a solid thesis statement for your introduction, and if you've done your job right, your whole paper focuses on that thesis statement. That's why it's so important to address the thesis in your conclusion! Many writers choose to begin the conclusion by restating the thesis, but you can put your thesis into the conclusion anywhere—the first sentence of the paragraph, the last sentence, or in between. Here are a few tips for rephrasing your thesis:

- Remind the reader that you've proven this thesis over the course of your paper. For example, if you're arguing that your readers should get their pets from animal shelters rather than pet stores, you might say, "If you were considering that puppy in the pet-shop window, remember that your purchase will support 'puppy mills' instead of rescuing a needy dog, and consider selecting your new friend at your local animal shelter." This example gives the reader not only the thesis of the paper, but a reminder of the most powerful point in the argument!
- Revise the thesis statement so that it reflects the relationship you've developed with the reader during the paper. For example, if you've written a paper that targets parents of young children, you can find a way to phrase your thesis to capitalize on that—maybe by beginning your thesis statement with, "As a parent of a young child…"
- Don't repeat your thesis word for word—make sure that your new statement is an independent, fresh sentence!

Summary or Synthesis

This section of the conclusion might come before the thesis statement or after it. Your conclusion should remind the reader of what your paper actually says! The best conclusion will include a synthesis, not just a summary—instead of a mere list of your major points, the best conclusion will draw those points together and relate them to one another so that your reader can apply the information given in the essay. Here are a couple of ways to do that:

- Give a list of the major arguments for your thesis (usually, these are the topic sentences of the parts of your essay).
- Explain how these parts are connected. For example, in the animal-shelter essay, you might point out that adopting a shelter dog helps more animals because your adoption fee supports the shelter, which makes your choice more socially responsible.

Context

One of the most important functions of the conclusion is to provide context for your argument. Your reader may finish your essay without a problem and understand your argument without understanding why that argument is important. Your introduction might point out the reason your topic matters, but your conclusion should also tackle this questions. Here are some strategies for making your reader see why the topic is important:

- Tell the reader what you want him or her to do. Is your essay a call to action? If so, remind the reader of what he/she should do. If not, remember that asking the reader to think a certain way is an action in itself. (In the above examples, the essay asks the reader to adopt a shelter dog—a specific action.)
- Explain why this topic is timely or important. For example, the animal-shelter essay might end with a statistic about the number of pets in shelters waiting for adoption.

- Remind the readers of why the topic matters to them personally. For example, it doesn’t matter much if you believe in the mission of animal shelters, if you're not planning to get a dog; however, once you're looking for a dog, it is much more important. The conclusion of this essay might say, "Since you’re in the market for a dog, you have a major decision to make: where to get one." This will remind the reader that the argument is personally important!

Resources

- **Conclusion paragraphs**

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1.13: Comparative Chart of Writing Strategies

Structuring Specialized Paragraphs

Many of the same common patterns of organizing your writing and thinking are available at the paragraph level to help you make your case to support your thesis. Using these common patterns helps readers understand your points more easily.

Pattern	Explanation	Example
Analogy	Analogies are used to draw comparisons between seemingly unlike people, items, places, or situations. Writers use analogies to help clarify a point.	Walking down an aisle at a farmers' market is like walking down the rows in a garden. Fresh mustard greens might be on one side and fresh radishes on another. The smell of green beans meshes with the smell of strawberries and the vibrant colors of nature are everywhere. You might find that you even have a little garden dirt on your shoes.
Cause and effect	Cause-and-effect paragraphs point out how one thing is caused by another and are used to clarify relationships.	You will find that your meals benefit greatly from shopping at the farmers' market. You will eat fewer unnatural foods, so you will feel better and have more energy. The freshness of the foods will make your dishes taste and look better. The excitement of finding something new at the market will translate to eagerness to try it out within a meal. It won't be long until you anticipate going to the farmers' market as a way to enhance the quality of your meals.
Comparison and contrast	Comparison and contrast is simply telling how two things are alike or different. You can choose to compare and contrast by selecting a trait, explaining how each thing relates, and then moving on to another trait (alternating organization, as here). Or for more complex comparisons and contrasts, you can describe all the features of one thing in one or more paragraphs and then all the features of the other thing in one or more paragraphs (block organization).	Tomatoes purchased at the farmers' market are almost totally different from tomatoes purchased in a grocery store. To begin with, although tomatoes from both sources will mostly be red, the tomatoes at the farmers' market are a brighter red than those at a grocery store. That doesn't mean they are shinier—in fact, grocery store tomatoes are often shinier since they have been waxed. You are likely to see great size variation in tomatoes at the farmers' market, with tomatoes ranging from only a couple of inches across to eight inches across. By contrast, the tomatoes in a grocery store will be fairly uniform in size. All the visual differences are interesting, but the most important difference is the taste. The farmers' market tomatoes will be bursting with flavor from ripening on the vine in their own time. The grocery store tomatoes are often close to flavorless. Unless you have no choice, you really should check out a farmers' market the next time you're shopping for fresh produce.
Definition	Definition paragraphs are used to clarify key word or concepts.	If you see a "pluot" at the farmers' market, give it a try. It might seem odd to see a fruit you have never heard of before, but pluots are relatively new in the fruit world. A pluot is a hybrid fruit created from joining an apricot and a plum. Pluots range in size from that of a small apricot to that of a large plum. The outer skin varies in color from sort of cloudy golden to cloudy purplish. Overall, a pluot looks and tastes more like a plum than an apricot, although the skins are less tart than those of typical plums.
Description	You can use description to bring something to life so that the readers can get a clear impression of it.	The farmers who sell their wares at the farmers' market near my house are as natural as their foods. They are all dressed casually so that they look more like they are hanging out with friends than trying to entice people to purchase something from them. The women aren't wearing makeup and the men have not necessarily shaved in a few days. They are eager to share information and samples without applying any sales pressure. They are people with whom you would likely enjoy sitting around a campfire and trading stories.
Examples	Examples are commonly used to clarify a point for readers.	You will find some foods at the farmers' market that you might not typically eat. For example, some farmers bring pickled pigs' feet

Pattern	Explanation	Example
		or mustard greens that taste like wasabi. Some vendors sell gooseberry pies and cactus jelly. It is not uncommon to see kumquat jam and garlic spears. The farmers' market is truly an adventuresome way to shop for food.
Narration	Narration is writing that sounds like a story. You might use narration within a nonfiction paper as a means of personalizing a topic or simply making a point stand out.	Sauntering through the farmers' market on a cool fall day, I happened upon a small lizard. Actually, my foot nearly happened upon him, but I stopped just in time to pull back and spare him. As I stooped to look at him, he scampered up over the top of a watermelon and out of sight. Glancing behind the melon, I saw that the lizard had a friend. I watched them bopping their heads at each other and couldn't help but wonder if they were communicating. Perhaps the one was telling the other about the big brown thing that nearly crashed down upon him. For him, I expect it was a harrowing moment. For me, it was just another charming trip to the farmers' market.
Problem–solution	A problem–solution paragraph begins with a topic sentence that presents a problem and then follows with details that present a solution for the problem.	Our farmers' market is in danger of closing because a building is going to be constructed in the empty lot where it has been held for the past ten years. Since the market is such an asset to our community, a committee formed to look for a new location. The first idea was to close a street off for a few hours each Saturday morning. Unfortunately, the city manager nixed that idea since he believed that too many people would complain. Barry Moore suggested that the market could be held in the state park that is just a few miles out of town. Again, a government worker struck down the idea. This time, the problem was that for-profit events are not allowed in state parks. Finally, I came up with the perfect idea, and our government blessed the idea. Since the high school is closed on Saturday, we will be having the market in the school parking lot.

Using a Clear Organizational Pattern

Depending on your writing topic, you might find it beneficial to use one of these common organizational patterns.

Pattern	Explanation	Example
Process analysis	A process analysis paragraph is used to describe how something is made or to explain the steps for how something is done.	The first key to growing good tomatoes is to give the seedlings plenty of room. Make sure to transplant them to small pots once they get their first leaves. Even when they are just starting out in pots, they need plenty of light, air, and heat. Make sure to warm up the ground in advance by covering it in plastic sheeting for a couple of weeks. When you are ready to plant them in soil, plant them deeply enough so they can put down some strong roots. Mulch next, and once the stems of the tomato plants have reached a few inches in height, cut off the lower leaves to avoid fungi. Carefully prune the suckers that develop in the joints of the developing stems.
Chronological	Chronological arrangement presents information in time order.	As soon as I arrived at the farmers' market, I bought a large bag of lettuce. I walked around the corner and saw the biggest, most gorgeous sunflower I had ever seen. So I bought it and added it to my lettuce bag. The flower was so big that I had to hold the bag right in front of me to keep it from being bumped. At the Wilson Pork Farm booth, I tasted a little pulled pork. You guessed it—I had to buy a quart of it. I went on with a plastic quart container in my left hand and my lettuce and flower in my right hand. I was handling it all just fine until I saw a huge hanging spider plant I had to have. Ever so gently, I placed my pulled pork container inside the spider fern plant pot. Now I was holding everything right in front of me as I tried to safely make my way through the crowd. That's when I met up with little Willie. Willie was about seven years old and he was playing tag with his brother. I'm not sure where their mother was, but Willie came running around the corner and smacked right into me. You are probably thinking that poor Willie had pulled pork all over his clothes and an upside-down plant on his head. But no, not at all. That was me. Willie didn't even notice. He was too busy chasing his brother.
General-to-specific	A common paragraph format is to present a general idea and then give examples.	The displays at the farmers' market do not lack for variety. You will see every almost every kind of fresh, locally grown food you can imagine. The featured fruits on a given day might be as varied as pomegranates, persimmons, guava, jackfruit, and citron. Vegetables might include shiitake mushrooms, artichokes, avocados, and garlic. Some vendors also sell crafts, preserves, seeds, and other supplies suitable for starting your own garden.
Specific-to-general	The reverse of the above format is to give some examples and then summarize them with a general idea.	Your sense of smell is awakened by eighteen varieties of fresh roma tomatoes. Your mouth waters at the prospect of sampling the fresh breads. Your eye catches a glimpse of the colors of handmade, embroidered bags. You linger to touch a perfectly ripe peach. Your ears catch the strain of an impromptu jug band. A walk up and down the aisles of your local farmers' market will engage all of your senses.
Spatial	A paragraph using spatial organizationpresents details as you would naturally encounter them, such as from top to bottom or from the inside to the outside. In other words,	From top to bottom, the spice booth at our farmers' market is amazing. Up high they display artwork painstakingly made with spices. At eye level, you see at least ten different fresh spices in small baggies. On the tabletop is located an assortment of tasting bowls with choices ranging from desserts to drinks to salads.

Pattern	Explanation	Example
	details are presented based on their physical location.	Below the table, but out of the way of customers, are large bags of the different spices. Besides being a great use of space, the spice booth looks both professional and charming.

Maintaining Internal Integrity of Paragraphs

A paragraph is more than just a group of sentences thrown together. You need to make linkages between your ideas, use parallelism, and maintain consistency.

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

Using Transitions

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

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

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Writing with Generative AI

2.1: What is Generative AI?
2.2: Ethics of AI-Generated Writing
2.3: AI for Idea Generation
2.4: AI for Organizing Writing
2.5: Edit and Revise with AI
2.6: Problems and Pitfalls of AI-Generated Texts
2.7: Guides and Resources for Writing with AI

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2.1: What is Generative AI?

Understanding Generative AI: A Student's Guide

What is Generative AI?

Generative AI, short for Generative Artificial Intelligence, refers to a class of algorithms that can generate new content based on the data they have been trained on. Unlike traditional AI, which focuses on recognizing patterns and making decisions, generative AI creates new data that mimics the patterns of the original dataset.

How Does Generative AI Work?

Generative AI models, like ChatGPT, are built using advanced techniques in machine learning and neural networks. Here's a simplified breakdown of how they work:

1. **Training Data**: Generative AI models are trained on vast amounts of data. For example, ChatGPT is trained on diverse text data from books, articles, websites, and other sources. This helps the model understand language patterns, grammar, and context.
2. **Neural Networks**: These models use neural networks, which are computer systems designed to mimic the way the human brain processes information. Neural networks consist of layers of nodes (or neurons) that process input data and pass it through the network to produce an output.
3. **Learning Patterns**: During training, the model learns to recognize patterns in the data. It learns which words and phrases are commonly used together and how different types of texts are structured.
4. **Generating Content**: When you input a prompt, the trained model generates new content based on what it has learned. It predicts the next word or phrase in a sequence by considering the context provided by the prompt.

Why Learn to Use Generative AI Effectively and Ethically?

Relevance in the Working World

1. **Enhancing Productivity**: Generative AI can help you generate ideas, draft documents, and streamline your writing process. In the working world, where time is often limited, being able to use AI to enhance your productivity can give you a significant advantage.
2. **Creative Collaboration**: AI can be a valuable collaborator, offering new perspectives and creative suggestions that you might not have considered. This can be particularly useful in fields like marketing, content creation, and design.
3. **Data Analysis and Reporting**: Many jobs require the ability to analyze data and report findings clearly. AI tools can assist in summarizing complex information and generating reports, making your work more efficient and impactful.
4. **Staying Competitive**: As AI becomes increasingly integrated into various industries, understanding how to leverage these tools can make you more competitive in the job market. Employers value employees who can use technology to solve problems and improve processes.

Ethical Considerations

1. **Responsible Use**: It's crucial to use generative AI responsibly. This means being aware of the potential biases in the data and ensuring that the content you generate is accurate, fair, and respectful. AI can sometimes produce outputs that reflect biases present in the training data, so it's important to critically evaluate the content it generates.
2. **Originality and Plagiarism**: While AI can help you generate content, it's essential to ensure that your work remains original. Use AI as a tool to inspire and assist you, but always add your own insights and ensure that your final work is uniquely yours. Plagiarism is a serious academic and professional offense, so be mindful of attributing sources correctly and creating authentic work.
3. **Privacy and Security**: Be aware of the privacy and security implications when using AI tools. Ensure that any sensitive information you input into AI systems is handled appropriately and that you are using secure, trusted platforms.
4. **Transparency**: When using AI-generated content, be transparent about it. If you use AI tools to assist in your writing, acknowledge this in your work. Transparency builds trust and shows that you are using technology ethically.

How to Use Generative AI in Your Writing

1. **Brainstorming**: Use AI to help brainstorm ideas for your essays, projects, or creative writing. Input prompts related to your topic and see what suggestions the AI provides. This can help you overcome writer's block and explore new angles.
2. **Drafting**: AI can help you draft sections of your writing. For example, you can ask AI to generate an introduction or conclusion based on your outline. Use these drafts as a starting point and refine them to fit your voice and style.
3. **Editing and Proofreading**: AI tools can assist with grammar checks, style suggestions, and overall readability. Use AI to help you identify errors and improve the clarity of your writing.
4. **Research Assistance**: AI can help you find relevant information and sources for your research. While it’s important to verify the information from reliable sources, AI can expedite the research process by summarizing key points and providing overviews.

Conclusion

Generative AI is a powerful tool that can enhance your writing and productivity when used effectively and ethically. By understanding how it works and applying best practices, you can leverage AI to stay competitive in the working world while ensuring that your work remains original, responsible, and impactful. Embrace the technology at your disposal, and let it guide you toward achieving your best work.

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2.2: Ethics of AI-Generated Writing

The Ethics of AI in Student Writing

Why Are We Here?

In today's digital age, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in various aspects of our lives is inevitable. AI, especially generative AI like ChatGPT, has become a valuable tool in education and writing. It can help us brainstorm, draft, edit, and enhance our writing. However, with these advancements come significant ethical considerations. Keep the big picture in mind! We are here to learn, grow, and prepare for our futures. How can we use AI to help us towards these goals?

The Importance of Being Effective Communicators

While AI can assist us in many ways, the ability to communicate effectively on our own remains a vital skill. Writing is a fundamental form of communication that reflects our thoughts, ideas, and knowledge. It is essential to develop our writing skills to articulate our perspectives clearly and persuasively. AI should be seen as a scaffold that supports and enhances our writing, not as a crutch that we rely on entirely.

Using AI as a Scaffold

AI can be a powerful tool to help you develop your writing. Here's how you can use AI effectively and ethically:

1. **Brainstorming**: Use AI to generate ideas and overcome writer's block. Input a topic or prompt, and let AI suggest different angles or themes you might explore. This can help you expand your thinking and consider new perspectives.
2. **Drafting**: AI can help you create initial drafts. You can use AI to write parts of your essay, such as the introduction or conclusion, based on your outline. Remember to refine and personalize these drafts to ensure your voice and style shine through.
3. **Editing and Proofreading**: AI tools can assist in checking grammar, spelling, and style. They can offer suggestions for improving clarity and coherence. Use these tools to polish your writing, but always review the changes to ensure they align with your intended message.
4. **Research Assistance**: AI can help summarize information and provide overviews of complex topics. Use AI to gather preliminary information, but always verify facts from reliable sources and integrate your insights.

Nobody Likes Being Deceived

Honesty and integrity are foundational principles in both academia and professional life. Misrepresenting your work by claiming AI-generated content as entirely your own is deceitful. This dishonesty can lead to serious repercussions, including loss of credibility, academic penalties, and damaged career prospects. Here's why it's crucial to use AI honestly and ethically:

- **Academic Integrity**: Academic institutions have strict policies against plagiarism and dishonesty. If you submit AI-generated content without proper acknowledgment, you risk violating these policies.
- **Professional Reputation**: In your career, honesty is essential. Employers value integrity and transparency. Misusing AI tools can harm your professional reputation and limit your career opportunities.
- **Personal Growth**: Developing your writing skills is essential for personal and intellectual growth. Relying solely on AI deprives you of the opportunity to learn and improve your abilities.

The Purpose of College

The purpose of college extends far beyond checking off boxes and earning a degree. That is a short-term view. You are here to learn skills that will serve you throughout your life and career. College is a time to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication skills. If you rely too heavily on easy fixes through technology, you will not get stronger. The true value of your education lies in the skills you acquire and the personal growth you experience. These skills will enable you to navigate complex challenges and succeed in your future endeavors.

Tips for Using AI Honestly and Ethically

1. **Acknowledge AI Assistance**: If you use AI tools to generate content or ideas, be transparent about it. A simple statement acknowledging the use of AI can maintain your credibility and integrity.

2. **Use AI for Support, Not Substitution**: Let AI assist you in brainstorming, drafting, and editing, but ensure the final work reflects your thoughts and style. Personalize and refine AI-generated content to make it your own.
3. **Develop Your Skills**: Use AI to enhance your writing, but continue to work on improving your skills independently. Practice writing regularly, seek feedback, and learn from your experiences.
4. **Verify Information**: When using AI for research, always cross-check the information from reliable sources. Ensure the accuracy and validity of the content you include in your work.
5. **Stay Informed**: Keep up-to-date with your institution's policies on AI use in academic work. Adhere to these guidelines to avoid any ethical breaches.

Encouragement and Motivation

Using AI ethically doesn't mean you're at a disadvantage. In fact, it can enhance your writing and make you more competitive. Here's how you can stay motivated:

- **Embrace Learning**: View AI as a learning tool that helps you grow. Each interaction with AI can teach you something new about writing and communication.
- **Value Integrity**: Uphold the principles of honesty and integrity in your work. Knowing that your achievements are genuinely your own brings a sense of pride and fulfillment.
- **Leverage AI for Growth**: Use AI to identify areas for improvement in your writing. Let it guide you toward better grammar, style, and clarity, but take the final steps yourself.

Using AI tools honestly and ethically can help you use these tools their full potential while maintaining the integrity of your work. The idea is to help you succeed academically and professionally but also ensure that you develop into a skilled and principled communicator.

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2.3: AI for Idea Generation

AI for Idea Generation

Introduction

Idea generation is a critical first step in the writing process. It involves brainstorming and developing concepts that form the foundation of your essay or project. With the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), writers have powerful tools at their disposal to assist in generating ideas quickly and efficiently. In this section, we'll explore how AI can be used for idea generation, discuss the benefits and potential pitfalls, and consider counterarguments about the importance of struggling with creative ideas.

How AI Can Help with Idea Generation

AI tools like ChatGPT can assist in brainstorming and developing ideas in various ways:

1. **Prompt Suggestions**: AI can provide prompts or questions to help kickstart your brainstorming process. For example, if you're writing a personal narrative, you can ask AI for prompts related to significant life events or experiences.
2. **Expanding Ideas**: AI can help expand on a basic idea by providing additional details or angles to consider. If you have a general topic in mind, AI can suggest specific aspects to explore further.
3. **Overcoming Writer's Block**: AI can help you overcome writer's block by generating a list of potential topics or themes based on your interests or the subject matter at hand.
4. **Inspiration from Examples**: AI can provide examples of similar work or related topics to inspire your own writing. Seeing how others have approached a topic can spark new ideas and directions for your writing.

Practical Uses of AI for Idea Generation

Here are some practical ways you can use AI to generate ideas for your writing:

- **Personal Narratives**: Ask AI for prompts about significant life experiences, challenges you've overcome, or moments of personal growth.
  - *Example*: "Can you suggest some prompts for writing a personal narrative essay about a life-changing experience?"
- **Research Papers**: Use AI to identify potential research questions or areas of focus within a broader topic.
  - *Example*: "What are some interesting research questions related to climate change and its impact on urban areas?"
- **Creative Writing**: Request ideas for characters, settings, or plot twists to enhance your creative writing projects.
  - *Example*: "Can you generate some unique character ideas for a science fiction story set in the future?"

Benefits of Using AI for Idea Generation

1. **Efficiency**: AI can quickly generate a wide range of ideas, saving you time during the brainstorming process.
2. **Diversity of Ideas**: AI can offer diverse perspectives and suggestions that you might not have considered, broadening your creative horizons.
3. **Overcoming Blocks**: AI can help you move past writer's block by providing fresh prompts and angles to explore.

Counterarguments: The Value of Struggling with Creative Ideas

While AI offers numerous benefits for idea generation, it's important to consider the counterarguments that emphasize the value of struggling with creative ideas:

1. **Personal Growth**: Struggling to come up with ideas can lead to personal growth and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The process of grappling with creative challenges can strengthen your problem-solving skills and enhance your ability to think critically.
2. **Meaningful Connections**: Ideas that emerge from personal struggle and reflection are often more meaningful and deeply connected to your own experiences and insights. This personal connection can make your writing more authentic and engaging.
3. **Creativity Development**: The creative process involves exploration, experimentation, and sometimes failure. By working through creative struggles, you develop your own unique voice and style, which are essential components of meaningful writing.

4. **Learning and Persistence**: Overcoming the difficulty of generating ideas fosters persistence and resilience. These qualities are valuable not only in writing but in all areas of life and work.

Balancing AI Use and Personal Effort

To make the most of AI for idea generation while maintaining the benefits of personal creative struggle, consider the following tips:

1. **Use AI as a Starting Point**: Let AI provide initial prompts or ideas, but take the time to reflect on and develop these ideas further on your own.
2. **Personalize and Expand**: Use AI-generated ideas as inspiration, but ensure that the final concepts reflect your own thoughts, experiences, and insights.
3. **Embrace the Process**: Allow yourself to engage in the creative struggle when needed. Use AI as a tool to support, not replace, your creative efforts.
4. **Critical Evaluation**: Critically evaluate the ideas generated by AI. Adapt and refine them to ensure they align with your goals and perspectives.

Conclusion

AI can be a powerful tool for idea generation, offering efficiency, diverse perspectives, and support in overcoming writer's block. However, the creative struggle involved in developing ideas is also valuable for personal growth, meaningful connections, and creativity development. By balancing the use of AI with personal effort and reflection, you can harness the best of both worlds, enhancing your writing while maintaining its authenticity and depth.

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2.4: AI for Organizing Writing

AI for Organizing Writing

Introduction

Organizing your writing is a critical step in the writing process. A well-organized piece of writing is easier to follow, more engaging, and more effective in communicating your ideas. AI tools, like ChatGPT, can help you organize your writing efficiently by providing structure, suggesting outlines, and offering tips for coherence and clarity. In this section, we will explore how to use AI to organize your writing, with practical examples and accessible explanations.

How AI Can Help with Organizing Writing

1. **Generating Outlines**: AI can help you create a clear outline for your essay or project. An outline serves as a roadmap, guiding you through the structure of your writing and ensuring that your ideas are presented logically.
2. **Providing Structure**: AI can suggest ways to structure your paragraphs and sections, making your writing more coherent and easier to follow.
3. **Ensuring Flow**: AI can help you maintain a logical flow between sections and ideas, offering transitions and linking phrases that connect different parts of your writing seamlessly.
4. **Summarizing Information**: AI can help you summarize complex information, making it easier to condense and organize your thoughts effectively.

Practical Uses of AI for Organizing Writing

Generating Outlines

An outline is a crucial tool for organizing your thoughts and ideas before you start writing. Here's how AI can help you generate an effective outline:

Example: You have to write an essay on the impact of social media on teenagers.

Prompt: "Can you help me create an outline for an essay on the impact of social media on teenagers?"

AI Response:

1. **Introduction**
   - Hook: A startling statistic about social media usage among teenagers
   - Background Information: Brief history of social media
   - Thesis Statement: Social media has significant effects on teenagers' mental health, social skills, and academic performance.
2. **Body Paragraph 1: Mental Health**
   - Topic Sentence: The impact of social media on teenagers' mental health is profound.
   - Evidence: Studies linking social media use to anxiety and depression
   - Analysis: Explanation of how social media contributes to mental health issues
   - Transition: Link to the next paragraph about social skills
3. **Body Paragraph 2: Social Skills**
   - Topic Sentence: Social media affects teenagers' social skills and interactions.
   - Evidence: Examples of decreased face-to-face interactions
   - Analysis: Discussion on the quality of online vs. offline relationships
   - Transition: Link to the next paragraph about academic performance
4. **Body Paragraph 3: Academic Performance**
   - Topic Sentence: Social media use can negatively impact academic performance.
   - Evidence: Statistics on time spent on social media vs. studying
   - Analysis: Explanation of how distractions from social media affect grades
   - Transition: Prepare for the conclusion
5. **Conclusion**

- Restate Thesis: Summarize the main points about mental health, social skills, and academic performance
- Implications: Discuss the broader implications of social media usage
- Closing Thought: Call to action or a thought-provoking question

Providing Structure

Once you have an outline, AI can help you structure your paragraphs to ensure each section of your essay is clear and cohesive.

Example: You need to write a paragraph on the impact of social media on teenagers' mental health.

Prompt: "How should I structure a paragraph about the impact of social media on teenagers' mental health?"

AI Response:

1. **Topic Sentence**: Introduce the main idea of the paragraph.
   - *Example*: "The impact of social media on teenagers' mental health is profound."
2. **Supporting Evidence**: Provide evidence to support your topic sentence.
   - *Example*: "Studies have shown that excessive social media use is linked to increased levels of anxiety and depression among teenagers."
3. **Explanation and Analysis**: Explain how the evidence supports your topic sentence.
   - *Example*: "This is because social media often creates unrealistic expectations and promotes negative self-comparison, which can harm teenagers' self-esteem and mental well-being."
4. **Example**: Include a specific example or case study.
   - *Example*: "For instance, a study by the American Psychological Association found that teenagers who spend more than three hours a day on social media are more likely to report high levels of anxiety."
5. **Concluding Sentence**: Wrap up the paragraph and link to the next point.
   - *Example*: "Therefore, it is clear that social media can have detrimental effects on teenagers' mental health, which in turn can affect their social interactions."

Ensuring Flow

AI can suggest transitions and linking phrases that help maintain a smooth flow between paragraphs and sections.

Example: You need to transition from a paragraph about mental health to a paragraph about social skills.

Prompt: "Can you provide a transition sentence from a paragraph about mental health to one about social skills?"

AI Response: "While the impact of social media on mental health is significant, it also plays a crucial role in shaping teenagers' social skills and interactions."

Summarizing Information

AI can help you condense and organize complex information, making it easier to incorporate into your writing.

Example: You have a lot of information about the effects of social media on academic performance and need to summarize it.

Prompt: "Can you help me summarize the effects of social media on academic performance?"

AI Response: "Social media use can negatively impact academic performance by reducing the time students spend studying and increasing distractions. Studies have shown that students who frequently use social media tend to have lower grades and are more likely to procrastinate on their assignments."

Conclusion

AI can be a valuable tool for organizing your writing. It can help you generate outlines, structure your paragraphs, ensure a logical flow, and summarize complex information. By using AI to support the organization of your writing, you can create clearer, more coherent, and more engaging essays and projects. Remember to personalize and refine the AI's suggestions to reflect your unique voice and style, ensuring that your final work is both effective and authentic.

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2.5: Edit and Revise with AI

Edit and Revise with AI

Introduction

Editing and revising are essential steps in the writing process. These stages involve refining your work to improve clarity, coherence, grammar, and overall quality. AI tools, like ChatGPT, can provide valuable assistance in this process, helping you identify areas for improvement and offering suggestions to enhance your writing. In this section, we will explore how to use AI effectively for editing and revising, with practical examples and accessible explanations.

How AI Can Help with Editing and Revising

1. **Grammar and Spelling Checks**: AI can quickly identify and correct grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, and punctuation issues, ensuring your writing is polished and professional.
2. **Style and Tone Suggestions**: AI can suggest improvements to your writing style and tone, helping you achieve the desired effect and maintain consistency throughout your work.
3. **Clarity and Coherence**: AI can highlight sentences or paragraphs that may be unclear or difficult to follow, offering suggestions to improve readability and coherence.
4. **Content Enhancement**: AI can provide feedback on the content of your writing, suggesting ways to strengthen your arguments, add supporting details, or improve the overall flow of your essay.

Practical Uses of AI for Editing and Revising

Grammar and Spelling Checks

Ensuring your writing is free from grammatical errors and spelling mistakes is crucial for maintaining professionalism and credibility. AI tools can help you quickly identify and correct these issues.

Example: You have written a draft of an essay and want to check for grammar and spelling errors.

Prompt: "Can you check my essay for grammar and spelling mistakes?"

AI Response:

1. **Original Sentence**: "The affect of social media on teenagers are significant, it affect their mental health and academic performance."
2. **Corrected Sentence**: "The effect of social media on teenagers is significant; it affects their mental health and academic performance."

Style and Tone Suggestions

Maintaining a consistent style and tone throughout your writing is important for effectively communicating your message. AI can suggest improvements to help you achieve the desired effect.

Example: You want to ensure your essay maintains a formal tone.

Prompt: "Can you suggest changes to make my essay sound more formal?"

AI Response:

1. **Original Sentence**: "Kids these days spend way too much time on social media, and it’s really bad for their grades."
2. **Revised Sentence**: "Adolescents today spend an excessive amount of time on social media, which negatively impacts their academic performance."

Clarity and Coherence

Clear and coherent writing is essential for ensuring your readers can easily follow your ideas. AI can help you identify and revise unclear or disjointed sections of your writing.

Example: You have written a complex paragraph and want to ensure it is clear and coherent.

Prompt: "Can you help me revise this paragraph to make it clearer?"

AI Response:

1. **Original Paragraph**: "Social media has lots of effects on teenagers. For example, they can get addicted to it, which makes it hard to focus on school. Also, there are issues with cyberbullying, and teens sometimes compare themselves to others, which can cause low self-esteem."
2. **Revised Paragraph**: "Social media significantly affects teenagers in various ways. Addiction to social media can hinder their ability to focus on schoolwork. Additionally, issues such as cyberbullying and the tendency for teens to compare themselves to others can lead to low self-esteem."

Content Enhancement

Strengthening the content of your writing can make your arguments more compelling and your overall essay more effective. AI can provide feedback and suggestions to help you enhance your content.

Example: You want to add more depth to an argument in your essay.

Prompt: "Can you suggest ways to strengthen my argument about the impact of social media on teenagers' mental health?"

AI Response:

1. **Original Argument**: "Social media can negatively affect teenagers' mental health."
2. **Enhanced Argument**: "Social media can have a detrimental impact on teenagers' mental health, as evidenced by numerous studies. For instance, research conducted by the American Psychological Association found that teenagers who spend more than three hours a day on social media are more likely to experience anxiety and depression. The constant exposure to idealized images and lifestyles on social media platforms can also lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem among teenagers."

Tips for Effective AI-Assisted Editing and Revising

1. **Review AI Suggestions Carefully**: AI tools can provide valuable feedback, but they are not infallible. Always review suggestions critically and ensure they align with your intended meaning and style.
2. **Personalize Your Writing**: Use AI suggestions as a starting point, but make sure to personalize and refine the content to reflect your unique voice and perspective.
3. **Combine AI with Human Feedback**: While AI can provide helpful insights, it’s also beneficial to seek feedback from peers, instructors, or mentors. Combining AI feedback with human feedback can give you a more comprehensive understanding of areas for improvement.
4. **Practice Makes Perfect**: Regularly using AI tools for editing and revising can help you develop a keener eye for detail and improve your writing skills over time.

Conclusion

AI can be a powerful ally in the editing and revising process, helping you polish your writing and ensure it is clear, coherent, and compelling. When you use AI tools for grammar and spelling checks, style and tone suggestions, clarity and coherence improvements, and content enhancement, you can elevate the quality of your work. Always be sure to personalize and refine AI suggestions, review them critically, and combine them with human feedback to achieve the best results. Keep in mind: we are here to learn and build skills through the writing process rather than simply produce papers.

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2.6: Problems and Pitfalls of AI-Generated Texts

Problems and Pitfalls of AI-Generated Texts

Introduction

While AI tools like ChatGPT can be incredibly useful for generating ideas, drafting content, and assisting with revisions, they are not without their problems and pitfalls. It's essential to be aware of these issues to use AI effectively and ethically in your writing. This section will explore some of the key challenges associated with AI-generated texts, including hallucinations, word choices, structural issues, plagiarism, and the generation of false information.

Misinformation

While generative AI tools can help users with such tasks as brainstorming for new ideas, organizing existing information, mapping out scholarly discussions, or summarizing sources, they are also notorious for not relying fully on factual information or rigorous research strategies. In fact, they are known for producing **"hallucinations,"** an AI science term used to describe false information created by the AI system to defend its statements. Oftentimes, these "hallucinations" can be presented in a very confident manner and consist of partially or fully fabricated citations or facts.

Certain AI tools have even been used to intentionally produce false images or audiovisual recordings to spread misinformation and mislead the audience. Referred to as **"deep fakes,"** these materials can be utilized to subvert democratic processes and are thus particularly dangerous.

Additionally, the information presented by generative AI tools **may lack currency** as some of the systems do not necessarily have access to the latest information. Rather, they may have been trained on past datasets, thus generating dated representations of current events and the related information landscape.

Bias

Another potentially significant limitation of AI is the **bias** that can be embedded in the products it generates. Fed immense amounts of data and text available on the internet, these large language model systems are trained to simply predict the most likely sequence of words in response to a given prompt, and will therefore reflect and perpetuate the biases inherent in the inputted internet information. An additional source of bias lies in the fact that some generative AI tools utilize reinforcement learning with human feedback (RLHF), with the caveat that the human testers used to provide this feedback are themselves non-neutral. Accordingly, generative AI like ChatGPT is documented to have provided output that is socio-politically biased, occasionally even containing sexist, racist, or otherwise offensive information.

AI Hallucinates Sources

One of the significant issues with AI-generated texts is that AI can hallucinate sources. This means that AI may generate citations or references that appear plausible but are entirely fabricated. These hallucinated sources do not exist and can lead to significant credibility issues if included in your academic work.

Example: *Prompt*: "Provide a source for the impact of social media on mental health."

AI Response: "According to a study by Dr. Jane Smith at Harvard University, social media usage is directly linked to increased levels of anxiety and depression."

Problem: The AI has fabricated a source that sounds credible but does not exist.

Impact: Using such fabricated sources can severely impact your grade and academic integrity.

Glaring Word Choices and Structure

AI-generated texts often have specific word choices and structural patterns that, if not adapted, can be easily identified by skilled readers. These patterns can make your writing appear unnatural and can diminish the originality of your work.

Example: *AI-Generated Sentence*: "The primary factor contributing to the deterioration of mental health among adolescents is the excessive utilization of social networking platforms."

Issue: The language may seem overly formal or awkward compared to your usual writing style.

Solution: Adapt AI-generated content to fit your voice and ensure that the language flows naturally.

Plagiarism and Its Consequences

Plagiarism is a severe offense in both academic and professional contexts. Submitting AI-generated content as your own without proper attribution is considered plagiarism and can have serious consequences, including academic penalties, loss of credibility, and professional repercussions.

Example: Using AI to generate an entire essay and submitting it without any modification or acknowledgment.

Consequence: If discovered, this can lead to failing the assignment, disciplinary action, or even expulsion.

Uniformity in Writing

We don't want everyone's writing to be the same. Over-reliance on AI can lead to homogenized writing, where everyone's work starts to sound similar. This uniformity diminishes the diversity of ideas and expressions that make writing interesting and valuable.

Example: Multiple students using the same AI tool and prompts for a similar assignment.

Result: The resulting essays may have strikingly similar language, structure, and content, reducing the individuality and creativity in each student's work.

AI Misunderstands Prompts and Generates False Information

AI can often misunderstand prompts and generate false or irrelevant information. For example, AI might produce incorrect formatting instructions, such as MLA citations, or create content that does not accurately address the prompt.

Example: *Prompt*: "Generate an MLA citation for a book."

AI Response: "Smith, John. The Effects of Social Media. Harvard University Press, 2020."

Problem: The AI generated a citation that follows some MLA conventions but includes fabricated details.

Impact: Using incorrect or fabricated citations can significantly affect the credibility and accuracy of your work.

Tips for Using AI as a Tool, Not a Substitute

To use AI effectively and ethically, consider the following tips:

1. **Review and Adapt**: Always review AI-generated content and adapt it to fit your voice and purpose. Ensure that the language and structure align with your writing style.
2. **Verify Sources**: Double-check any sources or citations generated by AI. Use trusted databases and verify that the sources actually exist and are relevant.
3. **Avoid Over-Reliance**: Use AI to assist with brainstorming, drafting, and revising, but do not rely on it to do all the work. Ensure that your final submission reflects your own effort and understanding.
4. **Cite AI Use**: If you use AI tools to help generate content, be transparent about it. Acknowledge the use of AI in your work to maintain integrity and avoid plagiarism.
5. **Maintain Individuality**: Infuse your unique perspective and creativity into your writing. Use AI as a starting point or a supplement, but ensure that your final work is distinct and original.
6. **Double-Check Facts**: AI can generate false information. Always verify facts and data independently from reliable sources to ensure accuracy.

Conclusion

AI tools can be incredibly helpful in the writing process, but they come with potential pitfalls that must be navigated carefully. Be aware of issues like hallucinated sources, unnatural word choices, plagiarism, uniformity, and false information, and use AI to enhance your writing rather than compromise it. Use AI as a supportive tool to aid your creativity and productivity, but always ensure that your final work reflects your own voice, effort, and integrity.

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2.7: Guides and Resources for Writing with AI

Key Takeways for AI-Supported Writing

- Meticulously fact-check all of the information produced by generative AI, including verifying the source of all citations the AI uses to support its claims.
- Critically evaluate all AI output for any possible biases that can skew the presented information.
- Avoid asking the AI tools to produce a list of sources on a specific topic as such prompts may result in the tools fabricating false citations.
- When available, consult the AI developers' notes to determine if the tool's information is up-to-date.
- Always remember that generative AI tools are not magic--they simply use large amounts of data to generate responses constructed to "make sense" according to common cognitive paradigms. Ultimately, your thinking and your writing should be your own.

Selected Readings

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Engaging with Texts- Read and Respond

3.1: Reading to Write

3.2: How to Read Like a Writer

3.3: Interpretation, Analysis, and Close Reading

3.3.1: Interpretation

3.3.2: Analysis

3.3.3: Techniques

3.4: Summary and Response

3.4.1: Techniques

3.4.2: Model Texts by Student Authors

3.5: Analysis and Synthesis

3.5.1: Techniques

3.5.2: Activities

3.5.3: Model Texts by Student Authors

3.6: Putting It Together- Writing Your Response

3.6.1: Model Texts by Student Authors

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3.1: Reading to Write

WHAT THIS HANDOUT IS ABOUT

This handout suggests reading, note-taking, and writing strategies for when you need to use reading assignments or sources as the springboard for writing a paper.

READING STRATEGIES

- **Read (or at least skim) all parts of the reading.** Sometimes the cover, title, preface, introduction, illustrations, appendices, epilogue, footnotes and "about the author" sections can provide you with valuable information.
- **Identify the genre of the reading.** What kind of a reading is it? (Journal article? Mass media? Novel? Textbook?) Why was it written? Who does the author assume is going to read this work? (Books about politics written for an audience of political scientists, for example, might be very different from books about politics written for the general public, for historians, or for sociologists.)
- **Consider the author.** What do you know or what can you learn about this person? Why did he or she write the book? What sources of information and/or methods did he or she use to gather the information presented in the book?
- **Guess why your instructor assigned the reading.** How does it fit in with other readings, class discussions, major course themes, or the purpose of the class?
- **Get out a calendar and plan your reading.** Get out a calendar and plan your reading. Plot the number of days or hours that it may take you to complete the reading. Be realistic. It may help to read one chapter of the reading and then revise your calendar —some readings take longer than others of a similar length. Visit the **Learning Center** if you'd like to learn more about scheduling your work or reading more quickly and effectively.
- **As you read, record your reactions and questions.** Any reaction or question is valid, from the specific ("What's that word mean?") to the general ("What's her point?"). Write them down now so that you'll remember them later. These reactions and questions can serve as material for class discussion, or they can be the jumping off point for brainstorming a paper.
- **Read with a friend.** Find someone else who is reading the same book. Set reading goals together and plan to share your reactions to sections of the reading before class, after class, over e-mail, and so on.
- **Visit your instructor during office hours to discuss the reading.** Your instructor will set aside hours when he or she will be available to meet with students. This is a great time to talk about the reading, ask questions, share your reactions, and get to know your instructor. You can do this with a friend or in a small group as well.
- **Think about what is missing in the reading.** Issues, events, or ideas that are missing, left out, avoided, or not discussed/addressed in the book might be important. Thinking about these omissions can give you a critical perspective on the reading by showing you what the author (consciously or unconsciously) doesn't want to deal with.
- **If you know you will have to answer a particular question in response to the reading, read with that question in mind.** Sometimes faculty will give you essay questions in advance. As you read the text, refer back to those questions and think about your emerging answers to them.

WRITING STRATEGIES

While reading

- **Write as you read.** Record your reactions informally and briefly after you've read for a while. When you're done reading a section, write for five minutes to capture your personal thoughts, reactions, and questions as you go along.
- **Keep your notes with your book.** Tuck a few sheets of paper or a notepad inside the book to record your ideas as you read.
- **Share your informal writing with a friend.** Trade notes/questions/reactions to the book. Write five-minute responses to one another about the reading. This can be done by e-mail.
- **Draw while you read.** Drawing pictures, maps or diagrams of relationships or important issues that you see emerging from the reading can help you understand them. Be willing to revise or redraw the map as you read.

After you read

- **React to the whole reading.** Take twenty minutes to record your reactions to the reading as a whole. (Return to the reading strategies list to get you started if you need to.) Don't be afraid to guess, hypothesize, or follow a tangent.

- **Reread the writing assignment**. The Writing Center has a useful **handout on understanding assignments** that may help.
- **Get out a calendar and schedule the time you will need to write your paper**. Working backwards from the due date, plot a timeline for producing the paper. Include time for at least one rough draft and one chance to receive feedback from others (a friend, your teaching assistant, your professor, the Writing Center, etc.) before turning it in.
- **Plan your research and think about citation**. If the assignment requires library research, decide upon a strategy for collecting and citing sources as you research and write. Be sure to cite any quoted information or information that was not generated by your own analysis. Your instructor can answer all of your questions about this important step.
- **Write a draft, preferably a few days before the paper is due**. Instructors can usually tell the difference between papers that have been carefully drafted and revised and papers that have been hurriedly written the night before they are due. Papers written the night before often receive disappointing grades.
- **Get feedback from at least one person, and preferably several people, before you finalize your draft**. When possible, give your readers a copy of the assignment, too. E-mail can make this process easier. See the Writing Center's **handout on getting feedback**.
- **Proofread your paper to catch errors before handing it in**. Taking the time to spell-check and proofread will make your paper easier to read and show your reader that you cared about the assignment. The Writing Center's **handout on editing and proofreading** may help.

When you get your paper back

- **Read all of your instructor's comments.** Assess your strengths and weaknesses in completing this reading/writing assignment. Plan what adjustments you'll make in the process for the next reading/writing assignment you will undertake. It may help to save all of your old papers so that you can refer back to them and look for patterns in your instructor's comments. You may also want to keep a small notebook for your own assessment—writing down that you didn't leave ample time for revision on one paper, for example, may help you remember to schedule your time more effectively for the next paper.

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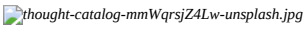
3.2: How to Read Like a Writer

Instructions:

Read the guide below that offers insights and practical tips for how to read "like a writer." Of course, we've all been reading a variety of texts for many years, but you may not be familiar with the ways reading closely and thoughtfully can dramatically improve your writing skills. As you read model essays and other texts for this course, try to practice the close reading process described here so that you get the maximum benefit from your reading time.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Why Reading Matters

Reading closely is essential for anyone aspiring to become a better writer. When we delve deep into the words on a page, we gain a profound understanding of the intricacies and nuances of the craft. Just as an artist studies every brushstroke of a masterpiece or a musician dissects each note of a symphony, close reading allows us to dissect the elements of a text, such as style, structure, and language. By immersing ourselves in the works of accomplished authors, we absorb their techniques and learn how to evoke emotions, create vivid imagery, and construct compelling narratives.

Reading closely enables us to identify effective storytelling devices, such as foreshadowing, character development, and symbolism, which we can then incorporate into our own writing. Much like a sculptor who studies the works of renowned sculptors to refine their own technique, a writer benefits from the meticulous examination of literary works to enhance their own artistry. Close reading helps us grasp the artistry behind great writing and inspires us to elevate our own work to new heights.

Annotating to Understand

Annotating and close reading are powerful techniques that help you engage with and comprehend complex texts more effectively. These strategies involve actively interacting with the text, marking it up, and making insightful observations. By following the steps below, you can enhance your reading skills and develop a deeper understanding of the material.

Steps for close reading:

1. Choose the right text: Select a text that is challenging and relevant to your studies and your interests. While you don't have to choose texts that reflect your individual experiences or interests (sometimes you won't have that option) it does help to have some connection to the text you're studying.
2. Set the stage: Find a quiet and comfortable place to read where you can focus without distractions. Have a pen, highlighter, sticky notes, or any other tools you prefer for annotating nearby.
3. Preview the text: Before diving into the reading, take a few minutes to preview the text. Skim through the headings, subheadings, and any visuals or illustrations. Read the introduction or the first and last paragraphs to get a sense of the main ideas and the author's purpose.
4. Read actively: As you read, engage with the text actively. Stay attentive and focus on comprehension. If you encounter unfamiliar words or phrases, use context clues or consult a dictionary to clarify their meaning.
5. Annotate: Annotation involves marking up the text to highlight important points, make notes, and ask questions. Use symbols, underlining, circling, or marginal notes to annotate key ideas, interesting details, confusing passages, or anything that stands out to you. This process helps you remember crucial information and promotes critical thinking.
6. Identify the main ideas: After reading a section or a chapter, take a moment to reflect and identify the main ideas. Summarize them in your own words either in the margins or in a separate notebook. This step helps solidify your understanding of the text's central concepts.
7. Analyze the author's techniques: Pay attention to the author's writing style, tone, and use of literary devices. Highlight examples of effective writing, metaphors, similes, or descriptive language that enhance the text. Reflect on how these techniques contribute to the author's message or purpose.
8. Consider the structure: Examine how the text is organized. Identify the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. Notice transitions and how ideas are connected. Understanding the structure helps you grasp the author's thought process and arguments more effectively.

9. Look for patterns and themes: Observe recurring ideas, motifs, or symbols within the text. Consider how they contribute to the overall meaning or message. Look for patterns in the author's use of language, imagery, or rhetorical devices. These patterns often provide insights into the text's deeper layers of meaning.
10. Reflect on your reactions and questions: Take note of your own reactions and questions as you read. What emotions does the text evoke? What puzzles or confuses you? Jot down your thoughts, reactions, and queries. These personal reflections can help you engage with the text on a deeper level and form the basis for further discussions or analysis.
11. Review and revisit: Once you have completed the reading, review your annotations and notes. Reflect on the connections you made, the questions that arose, and the main ideas you identified. This step reinforces your comprehension and prepares you for discussions, essays, or exams related to the text.

Takeaways

Return to this process as we explore new texts in this course and beyond. Annotating and close reading are gradual, iterative processes that require practice and patience, so don't worry if this feels unfamiliar or challenging at first. With time, these techniques will become second nature, allowing you to engage more deeply with texts, extract meaning, and develop a more meaningful understanding of the material you encounter.

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3.3: Interpretation, Analysis, and Close Reading

Chapter Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Definition
critical/active reading	also referred to in this text as "engaged reading," a set of strategies and concepts to interrupt projection and focus on a text. See Appendix B: Engaged Reading Strategies
interpretation	the process of consuming rhetoric to create meaning. "An interpretation" refers to a specific meaning we build as we encounter a text, focusing on certain ideas, language, or patterns.
text	any artifact through which a message is communicated. Can be written or spoken; digital, printed, or undocumented; video, image, or language. Every text is rhetorical in nature. See rhetoric.
text wrestling	a rhetorical mode in which an author analyzes a text using close reading, then presents an interpretation supported by evidence from the text.

Along the way to this point of your educational career, you've probably encountered the term **critical reading** or **active reading** more than a few times. Teachers tell students of all ages that using active reading skills is important for reading comprehension, critical thinking, and even effective writing. But what exactly does it mean to read critically or actively?

Perhaps it would serve us to step back and first consider what is being read.

" CSAF releases 2009 reading list" by Master Sgt. Steven Goestsch in the Public Domain

Most often, we think of a text as a written piece- an essay, a poem, a newspaper article, a novel. While this is often the case, a **text** can be anything: it is an articulation of rhetoric, bearing in mind that we are constantly surrounded by rhetoric. An advertisement is a text; a series of tweets is a text; a TV show is a text; an improvised dance number is a text.

Every text, in turn, is subject to **interpretation**. Interpretation refers to the process of consuming rhetoric to create meaning. A text by itself does not actually *mean* anything; rather, we *build* meaning as we engage with a text. This is an important distinction to make because

- As a reader, your interpretation is unique, informed by your lived experiences, your education, your mood(s), your purpose, and your posture. To an extent, no two readers will interpret a text exactly the same way.
- As an author, you must be cognizant that your writing only impacts your audience when they encounter it from their unique interpretive position. You may carefully construct a piece of writing to capture meaning, but that meaning only exists when a reader engages with what you've written.

Because texts can come in such diverse and complex forms, the strategies entailed in "critical" and "active reading" are only the first step: they are tools in our toolkits that lay the groundwork for interpretation. In other words, *engaged reading strategies* (like those in the so-titled Appendix A) prepare us for **text wrestling**.

Text wrestling refers to an analytical encounter with a text during which you, the reader, make observations and informed arguments about the text as a method of creating meaning and cultivating unique insight. Most often, this encounter will eventually lead to an essay that shares your analysis with your classmates, your teacher, or a broader audience.

The following section explores the cognitive and rhetorical techniques that support text wrestling. While your teacher may ask you to focus on a particular medium or genre of text for a text wrestling essay, this section will explore analytical processes that can be applied to many different kinds of texts. First, in Chapter Four, we will review the ideas and skills for thinking analytically. After that, we will turn to ideas and skills for writing about that analytical thinking, including summary, note-taking, and synthesis.

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3.3.1: Interpretation

Interpretation

When *Mad Max: Fury Road* came out in 2015, it was lauded as a powerful feminist film. No longer was this franchise about men enacting post-apocalyptic violence; now, there was an important place in that universe for women. A similar phenomenon surrounded *Wonder Woman* in 2017: after dozens of male-fronted superhero movies, one would finally focus on a female hero exclusively.

Some people, though, were resistant to this reading of feminism in film. I found myself in regular debates after each of these releases about what it meant to promote gender equality in film: does substituting a violent woman for a violent man constitute feminism? Is the leading woman in a film a feminist just by virtue of being in a female-fronted film? Or do her political beliefs take priority?[1] Does the presence of women on the screen preclude the fact that those women are still highly sexualized?

These questions, debates, and discussions gesture toward the **interpretive process**. Indeed, most arguments (verbal or written) rely on the fact that we each process texts and information from different positions with different purposes, lenses, and preoccupations. Why is it that some people leave the theater after *Mad Max* or *Wonder Woman* feeling empowered, and others leave deeply troubled?

Interpretation is a complex process that is unique to every reader. It is a process of meaning-making that relies on your particular position as a reader. Your interpretive position is informed by several factors.

- Your **purpose** - In the same way you have a rhetorical purpose in writing, you often have a purpose in reading, either consciously or subconsciously. What are you trying to accomplish in this encounter with a text?
- Your **posture** - The stance you assume relative to a text will contribute to what meaning you make as you read, think about, and write about that text. This relative position might be emotional (what mood you're in while reading) or contextual (what situation you're reading in), and may also be impacted by your background and purpose.
- Your **background** - Your lived experiences have trained you to perceive texts with certain assumptions. This background is a blend of cultural, educational, geographical, familial, ideological, and personal influences, among many others.
- Your **lens** - Related to your purpose, lens refers to the way you focus your attention on particular ideas, images, and language to construct meaning. Toward what elements are you directing your attention?

It would be simpler, perhaps, to acknowledge that we will never all agree on an interpretation of a text because of these differences. But the stakes are higher here than simply, "Is *Mad Max* feminist?" Interpretation gets down to the very way we encounter the world; it is about all our biases and flaws; it is about truth; it is about building new knowledges and dismantling institutional oppression. In other words, analytical interpretation is not so esoteric as slotting texts into labels like "feminist" or "not feminist." It is a practice of thinking critically, examining our sense of community and communication, and pursuing social justice.

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3.3.2: Analysis

Analysis

On a basic level, **analysis** refers to the conceptual strategy of "part-to-whole." Because I grew up playing with LEGOs® (or, more often, the cheap knock-offs), I like to use this analogy: Imagine a castle built of 1000 LEGO bricks. I can look at the entire structure and say, "Oh, that's a castle"- this is a reasonable interpretation. But to understand how that e has actually come together, I pull a few of the LEGO bricks from various parts of the structure. I look at those bricks individually, closely examining each side (even the side that I couldn't see when they were part of the castle).

"lego pile" by justgrimes is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

":jovian:" by bf8done is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

When I say "This is a castle," I am not analyzing . But next, perhaps I ask myself, "What is each of these blocks *doing* to create what I can clearly interpret as a castle?" This is the process of analysis.

Which bricks to choose, though? As we discussed in Chapter One, attention is always selective: we automate most of our daily experience for the sake of efficienct and survival, so we often overlook the trees when we see the forest -or each LEGO brick when we see the castle.

Analysis, then, is a practice of radical noticing (like description): it invites you to attend to the details that add up to a complex reality. But analysis also involves conscientious focus of your attention, or a **lens**. Just like reading glasses can bring these words into focus, an analytical lens brings specific ideas, words, or patterns into sharper focus, making them easier to process and interpret.

Sometimes, especially in English classrooms, analysis of a text is referred to as **close reading.**[2] Importantly, close reading as a technique is not a magical key to meaning, not a super-secret decoder ring for a deeply encrypted code. Rather, it is a means to unpack a text and construct a unique, focused interpretation. Close reading is an **iterative** process: by repeatedly encountering, unpacking, and discussing a text, you can develop an analytical insight thought guided and focused interpretations of its meaning.

In an analytical situation, your readerly purpose might determine your focus: for example, if you're trying to convince a friend that *Wonder Woman* is a feminist film, you would keep your eyes peeled for images, words, and other makers that align with such an interpretation, like situations featuring independent powerful women or an equitable ratio of dialogue spoken by female characters vs. male characters. It is important to note, though, that good analysis embraces curiosity and allows you to notice elements that might contradict, complicate, or nuance your original purpose: in addition to finding evidence in support of your interpretation, you should also be aware of characteristics that push back against your expectations.

Chapter Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Definition
authorial intent	the inferred or speculated intention of a writer. Must be overlooked in the process of text wrestling analysis.
analysis	the cognitive process and/or rhetorical mode of studying constituent parts to demonstrate an interpretation of a larger whole.
connotation	the associated meanings of a word, phrase, or idea beyond its 'dictionary' definition; the complex, subjective, and dynamic meanings of a word, phrase, or idea the shift based on interpretive position, Contrast with denotation.
close reading	a technique of reading that focuses attention on features of the text to construct an interpretation. (This is in contrast to interpretive methods that rely on research, historical context, biography, or speculation.)
denotation	the dictionary definition of a word, phrase, or idea; the standard and objective meaning of a word, phrase, or idea which, theoretically, does not vary based on interpretive position. Contrast with connotation.
interpretation	the process of consuming rhetoric to create meaning. "An interpretation" refers to a specific meaning we build as we encounter a text, focusing on certain ideas, language, or patterns.
interpretive position	the unique position from which each of us interprets a text-necessarily different for all people at any given time, and often different for the same person at different times in their life.
iterative	literally, a repetition within a process. Analysis is iterative because it requires repeated critical encounters with a text.
lens	a metaphor for the conceptual framework a reader applies to an analysis. A "lens" brings certain elements into focus, allowing the reader to attend to specific parts of a text to develop an interpretation.
motif	a recurring image or phrase that helps convey a theme. Similar to a symbol, but the relationship between symbol and symbolized is more one-to-one than between motif and theme.
pattern	a notable sequence; structure or shape; recurring image, word, or phrase found in a piece of rhetoric.
reference	a connection a text makes to another text. Can be explicit or implicit; might include allusion, allegory, quotation, or parody. Referencing text adopts some characteristics of the referenced text.
symbol	an artifact (usually something concrete) that stands in for (represents) something else (often something abstract).

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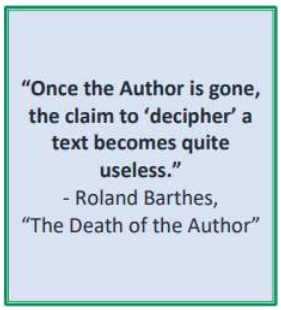
3.3.3: Techniques

Techniques

Authorial Intent

In a groundbreaking 1967 essay, Roland Barthes declared that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author."[57] In the fifty years since its publication, "The Death of the Author" has greatly influenced the way students, teachers, and academics conduct analysis. Most critics have come to acknowledge that the personal and historical context of the author is not entirely irrelevant, as Barthes might seem to suggest; rather, most people value Barthes' notion that we must free ourselves from the trap of **authorial intent**. This is to say, what we have to work with it the text itself, so it doesn't matter what the author *wanted* to say, but instead what they *did* say. Therefore, we should work from the assumption that every choice the author made was *deliberate*.



This choice to avoid speculation about the author's intent or personality is consistent with the theories of text wrestling analysis explored in this chapter's introduction. Because meaning is always and only constructed through interpretation, we should let go of the idea that the author (or the "secret meanings" the author wrote into a text) is hidden somewhere beneath the surface. There is nothing "hidden" behind the text or in between the lines: there is only the text and those who interpret it.

This idea might seem to contradict one of the central frameworks of this textbook: that unpacking the rhetorical situation is crucial to critically consuming and producing rhetoric.

Overlooking authorial intent does not mean that the authors' rhetorical situation is no longer important. Instead, we should simply avoid unproductive speculation: we can consider the author's occasion, but we shouldn't try to guess about their motives. For instance, we can say that Malcolm X's writing was influenced by racial oppression in the 1950s and 1960s in the U.S., but not by his preferences for peas over carrots. It's a fine line, but an important one.

Moreover, the choice to focus on what the author actually wrote, assuming that each word is on purpose, is *part* of the rhetorical situation of analysis. Your audience might also be curious about the author's intent, but your rhetorical purpose in this situation is to demonstrate an interpretation of the *text* - not the author.

Radical Noticing: Seeing What's on the Page

When we were early readers, we were trained to encounter texts in a specific way: find the main idea, focus on large-scale comprehension, and ignore errors, digressions, or irrelevant information. As Jane Gallop discusses in her essay, "The Ethics of Reading: Close Encounters," this is a useful skill but a problematic one. Because we engage a text from a specific interpretive position (and because we're not always aware of that position), we often project what we anticipate rather than actually reading. Instead of reading what *is* on the page, we read what we think *should* be.

Projection is efficient - one e-mail from Mom is probably like all the others, and one episode of *The Simpsons* will probably follow the same trajectory as every episode from the last twenty-odd years. But projection is also problematic and inhibits analysis. As Gallop puts it,

When the reader concentrates on the familiar, she is reassured that what she already knows is sufficient in relation to this new book. Focusing on the surprising, on the other hand, would mean giving up the comfort of the familiar, of the already known for the sake of learning, of encountering something new, something she didn't already know.

In fact, this all has to do with learning. Learning is very difficult; it takes a lot of effort. It is of course much easier if once we learn something we can apply what we have learned again and again. It is much more difficult if every time we confront something new, we have to learn something new.

Reading what one expects to find means finding what one already knows. Learning, on the other hand, means coming to know something one did not know before. Projecting is the opposite of learning. As long as we project onto a text, we cannot learn from it, we can only find what we already know. Close reading is thus a technique to make us learn, to make us see what we don't already know, rather than transforming the new into the old.[58]

Analysis as "learning," as Gallop explains, is a tool to help interrupt projection: by focusing on and trying to understand *parts*, we can redirect our attention to what the author ***is saying*** rather than what ***we think they should have said***. In turn, we can develop a more complex, ethical, and informed understanding of a ***whole***.

Perhaps the most important part of analysis is this attention to detail. If we assume that every word the author published is intentional (in order to avoid speculation about authorial intent), then we can question the meaning and impact of each word, each combination of words, each formal feature of the text. In turn, you should pay special attention to words or forms that surprise you or confuse you: the eye-catching and the ambiguous.

Symbols, Patterns, and References[59]

There us no definitive "how-to" guide on text wrestling, but I often ask my students to direct their attention to three particular elements of a text during their interpretive processes. When you draw connections through the following categories, you are actively building meaning from the words on the page.

27) Symbol: A symbol, as you may already know, is an artifact (usually something concrete) that stands in for (represents) something else (often something abstract).

✔ Here are a few examples:

- Barack Obama's 2008 campaign logo: the O, of course, stands in for the candidate's last name; the red lines seem to suggest a road (implying progress), or maybe waving American flag; the blue curve represents a clear, blue sky (implying safety or wellbeing); the colors themselves are perhaps symbolic of bipartisan cooperation, or at the very least, the American color palette of red, white, and blue.

"Obama Iphone Wallpaper" by Tony Gumbel is licensed under CC BY 2.0

- In Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat," the titular black cat symbolizes the narrator's descent into madness, alcoholism, and violence, and later his guilt for that descent.
- The teaspoon used to hypnotize people ion the film *Get Out* (2017) symbolizes wealth, power, and privilege (a "silver spoon [Wikipedia entry]"), suggesting that those structures are tools for control and domination.
- In *Beowulf*, the Old English epic poem, the monster Grendel symbolizes a fear of the unknown and the intractability of nature.
- In *The Great Gatsby*, the green light at the end of the Buchanan's dock symbolizes nostalgia and hope.

* A **motif** is closely related to a symbol, but it is different. A motif is a recurring image, word, or phrase that helps to carry a theme or other abstact idea. For example, William Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily" includes frequent use of the word "dust". While the dust is not directly symbolic of anything, it certainly brings to mind a variety of **connotations**: reading "dust" makes you think of time passing, stagnancy, decay, and so on. Therefore, the motif of "dust" helps contribute to bigger characteristics, like tone and themes.

5. Pattern: **Patterns** are created by a number of rhetorical moves, often in form. Repetition of phrases or images, the visual appearance of text on a page, and character archetypes might contribute to patterns. While patterns themselves are interesting and

important, you might also notice that *breaking* a pattern is a significant and deliberate move.

- The episode of the TV series *Master of None* titled "Parents" (Season 1, Episode 2) tells the respective stories of two immigrant families. By tracing the previous generation of each immigrant families through a series of flashbacks, the episode establishes a pattern in chronology: although the families have unique stories, the pattern highlights the similarities of these two families' experiences. In turn, this pattern demonstrates the parallel but distinct challenges and opportunities faced by the immigrants and first-generation American citizens the episode profiles.
- In Wilfred Owen's poem "Dulce Et Decorum Est," each line of the first stanza contains ten syllables. However, the following stanzas contain occasional deviations -more or fewer syllables- creating a sense of disorder and also drawing emphasis to the pattern-breaking lines.
- Tyehimba Jess, author of *Olio* and *Leadbelly*, painstakingly crafts patterns in his poetry. For instance, his series of sonnets on Millie and Christine McKoy [Wikipedia entry] follows not only the conventions of traditional sonnets, but are also interlocking, exemplifying the distinct but overlapping voices of conjoined twins.

"No More Breaks" by jlaytarts2090 is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

6. Reference: A **reference** is a connection a text makes to another text. By making a reference (whether obvious or hiddent), the referencing text adopts some characteristics of the referenced text. References might include allusion, allegory, quotation, or parody.

- C.S. Lewis' classic young adult series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, is a Christian allegory. The imagery used to describe the main hero, Aslan the lion, as well as a number of the other stories and details, parallel the New Testament. In turn, Aslan is imbued with the savior connotation of Jesus Christ.
- The TV show *Bob's Burgers* makes frequent references to pop culture. For instance, the fictional boy band featured in the show, Boyz 4 Now, closely resembles One Direction, *NSYNC, and Backstreet Boys - and their name is clearly a reference to Boyz II Men.
- "Women Hollering Creek," a short story by Sandra Cisneros, deals with the dangers of interpersonal violence. The protagonist refers frequently to *telenovelas*, soap operas that set unrealistic and problematic assumptions for healthy relationships. These references suggest to us that interpersonal violence is pervasive in media and social norms.

Sociocultural Lenses[60]

In addition to looking for symbols, patterns, and references, you might also focus your analytical reading by using a sociocultural critical **lens**. Because your attention is necessarily selective, a limited resource, these lenses give you suggestions for where you might direct that attention. While it is beyond the scope of this book to give in-depth history and reading practices for different schools of literary criticism or cultural slides, the following are common lenses applied during textual analysis. (Free resources from the Purdue OWL introduce students to some of these schools of criticism.)

As you engage with a text, you should look for touchstones, tropes, or symbols that relate to one or more of the following critical perspectives.

- Gender and sexuality

How does the text portray the creation and performance of gender? How many people of different genders are included in the story? Do the characters in the text express gender according to traditional standards? How do characters resist the confines of gender? How much attention, agency, and voice are allowed to women, men, and non-binary or genderqueer characters?

What relationships- familial, friendly, romantic, sexual, etc. - are portrayed in the text? How do these relationships compare to the relationships of the dominant culture?How much attention, agency, and voice are allowed to LGBTQIA25+ people?

- Disability

How does the text represent people with disabilities? Does the text reveal damaging stereotypes or misconceptions about people with disabilities or their life experiences? Does the text illuminate the social/ environmental construction of disabilities? How does the text construct or assume the normative body?

- Race, ethnicity, and nationality

How does the text represent people of color, of minority status, and/or different nationalities? What does it suggest about institutionalized racism and discrimination? How does the text examine or portray cultural and individual identities? How do the characters resist racism, xenophobia, and oppression? How do they reproduce, practice, or contribute to racism, xenophobia, or oppression?

- Social Class and economy

How does the text represent differences in wealth, access, and resources? Do people cross the divisions between socioeconomic statuses? Are characters of greater status afforded more power, agency, or freedom - in plot events or in the text more generally? How do exploited people resist or reproduce exploitation?

- Ecologies and the environment

Does the setting of the text represent a 'natural' world? How does the text represent nature, ecosystems, non-human animals and other living organisms? Does the text, its narrative, or its characters advocate for environmental protection? Does the text speak to the human impact on global ecological health?

- (Post)colonialism

What is the relationship of the characters and the setting, historically and culturally? Does the text take place in a currently or formerly colonized nation? Which of the characters are from that place? How have the effects of colonialism and imperialism influenced the place and its indigenous people? How have subjected, enslaved, or exploited people preserved culture or resisted colonialism? How does the text represent patterns of migration- forced or voluntary?

Some texts will lend themselves to a certain lens (or combination of lenses) based on content or the rhetorical situation of the author or reader. Bring to mind a recent movie you watched, book you read, or other text you've encountered; by asking the italicized questions above, determine whether that text seems to be asking for a certain sociocultural perspective.

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3.4: Summary and Response

Section Introduction- Summary and Response

As you sharpen your analytical skills, you might realize that you should use evidence from the text to back up the points you make. You might use direct quotes as support, but you can also consider using summary.

A **summary** is a condensed version of a text, put into your own words. Summarizing is a useful part of the analytical process because it requires you to read the text, interpret and process it, and reproduce the important points using your own language. By doing so, you are (consciously or unconsciously) making choices about what matters, what words and phrases mean, and how to articulate their meaning.

Often (but not always), **response** refers to a description of a reader's experience and reactions as they encounter a text. Response papers track how you feel and what you think as you move through a text. More importantly, responses also challenge you to evaluate exactly *how* a text acts upon you- to make you feel or think a certain way- using language or images. While a response is not an analysis, it will help you generate ideas for the analytical process.

Chapter Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Definition
direct quote	the verbatim use of another author's words. Can be used as evidence to support your claim, or as language to analyze/ close-read to demonstrate an interpretation or insight.
paraphrase	author reiterates a main idea, argument, or detail of a text in their own words without drastically altering the length of the passage(s) they paraphrase. Contrast with summary.
response	a mode of writing that values the reader's experience of and reactions to a text.
summary	a rhetorical mode in which an author reiterates the main ideas, arguments, and details of a text in their own words, condensing a longer text into a smaller version. Contrast with paraphrase.

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3.4.1: Techniques

Techniques

Identifying Main Points, Concerns, and Images

If you ever watch TV shows with a serial plot, you might be familiar with the phrase "Previously, on _____." The snippets at the beginning of an episode are designed to remind the viewer of the important parts of previous episodes- but how do makers of the show determine what a viewer needs to be refreshed on? And why am I watching full episodes if they'll just tell me what I need to know in the first minute of the next episode?

Typically, the makers of the show choose short, punchy bits that will be relevant in the new episode's narrative arc. For instance, a "Previously, on *The Walking Dead"* might have a clop from ten episodes ago showing zombies invading Hershel's farm if the new episode focuses on Hershel and his family. Therefore, these "previously ons" hook the viewer by showcasing only exciting parts and prime the viewer for a new story by planting specific details in their mind. Summaries like this are driven by purpose, and consequently have a specific job to do in choosing main points.

You, too, should consider your rhetorical purpose when you begin writing summary. Whether you are writing a summary essay or using summary as a tool for analysis, your choices about what to summarize and how to summarize to should be determined by what you're trying to accomplish with your writing.

As you engage with a text you plan to summarize, you should begin by identifying main points, recurring images, or concerns and preoccupations of the text. (You may find the Engaged Reading Strategies appendix of this book useful.) After reading and rereading, what ideas stick with you? What does the author seem distracted by? What keeps cropping up?

Tracking Your Reactions

As you read and reread a text, you should take regular breaks to check in with yourself to track your reactions. Are you feeling sympathetic toward the speaker, narrator, or author? To the other characters? What other events, ideas, or contexts are you reminded of as you read? Do you understand and agree with the speaker, narrator, or author? What is your emotional state? At what points do you feel confused or uncertain, and why?

Exercise

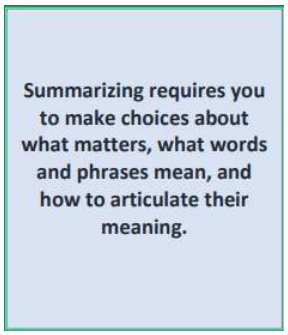
Try out the double-column note-taking method. As illustrated below, divide a piece of paper into two columns; on the left, make a heading for "Notes and Quotes," and on the right, "Questions and Reactions." As you move through a text, jot down important ideas and words from the text on the left, and record your intellectual and emotional reactions on the right. Be sure to ask prodding questions of the text along the way, too.

Notes and Quotes	Questions and Reactions

Writing Your Summary

Once you have read and re-read your text at least once, taking notes and reflecting along the way, you are ready to start writing a summary. Before starting, consider your rhetorical situation: What are you trying to accomplish (purpose) with your summary? What details and ideas (subject) are important for your reader (audience) to know? Should you assume that they have also read the text you're summarizing? I'm thinking back here to the "Previously on..." idea: TV series don't include **everything** from a prior

episode; they focus instead on moments that set up the events of their next episode. You too should choose your content in accordance with your rhetorical situation.



I encourage you to start off articulating the "key" idea or ideas from the text in one or two sentences. Focus on clarity of language: start with simple word choice, a single idea, and a straightforward perspective so that you establish a solid foundation.

The authors support feminist theories and practices that are critical of racism and other oppressions.

Then, before that sentence, write one or two more sentences that introduce the title of the text, its authors, and its main concerns or interventions. Revise your key idea sentence as necessary.

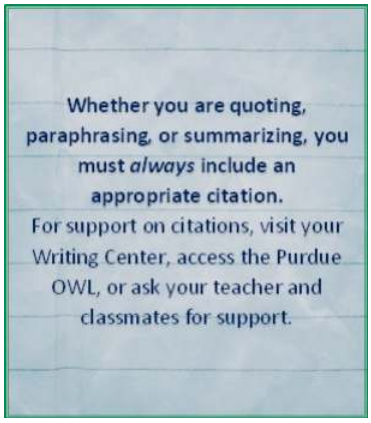
In "Why Our Feminism Must Be Intersectional (And 3 Ways to Practice It)," Jarune Uwuajaren and Jamie Utt critique what is known as 'white feminism.' They explain that sexism is wrapped up in racism, Islamophobia, heterosexism, transphobia, and other systems of oppression. The authors support feminist theories and practices that recognize intersectionality.

Your next steps will depend largely on the reasons you are summarizing. Has your teacher asked you to summarize objectively, reproducing the ideas of the text without adding your own ideas or reactions? Have they asked you to critique the article, by both showing understanding and then pushing back against the text? Follow the parameters of your assignment; they are an important element of your rhetorical situation.

In most summary assignments, though, you will be expected to draw directly from the article itself by using direct quotes or paraphrases in addition to your own summary.

Paraphrase, Summary, and Direct Quotes

Whether you're writing a summary or broaching your analysis, using support from the text will help you clarify ideas, demonstrate your understanding, or further your argument, among other thins. Three distinct methods, which Bruce Ballenger refers to as "The Notetaker's Triad," will allow you to process and reuse information from your focus text.[67]



A **direct quote** might be most familiar to you: using quotation marks (" ") to indicate the moments that you're borrowing, you reproduce an author's words verbatim in your own writing. Use a direct quote if someone else wrote or said something in a distinctive or particular way and you want to capture their words exactly. Direct quotes are good for establishing *ethos* and

providing evidence. In a text wrestling essay, you will be expected to use multiple direct quotes: in order to attend to specific language, you will need to reproduce segments of that language in your analysis.

Paraphrasing is similar to the process of summary. When we paraphrase, we process information or ideas from another person's text and put it in our words. The main difference between paraphrase and summary is scope: if summarizing means rewording and condensing, then paraphrasing means rewording without drastically altering length. However, paraphrasing is also generally more faithful to the spirit of the original; whereas a summary requires you to process and invites your own perspective, a paraphrase ought to mirror back the original idea using your own language.

Paraphrasing is helpful for establishing background knowledge or general consensus, simplifying a complicated idea, or reminding your reader of a certain part of another text. It is also valuable when relaying statistics or historical information, both of which are usually more fluidly woven into your writing when spoken with your own voice.

Summary, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is useful for "broadstrokes" or quick overviews, brief references, and providing plot or character background. When you summarize, you reword and condense another author's writing. Be aware, though, that summary also requires individual thought: when you reword, it should be a result of you processing the idea yourself, and when you condense, you must think critically about which parts of the text are most important. As you can see in the example below, one summary shows understanding and puts the original into the author's own words; the other summary is a result of a passive rewording, where the author only substituted synonyms for the original.

Example 1

Original Quote: "On Facebook, what you click on, what you share with your 'friends' shapes your profile, preferences, affinities, political opinions and your vision of the world. The last thing Facebook wants is to contradict you in any way" (Filloux).

Summary Example	Pass/Fail
On Facebook, the things you click on and share forms your profile, likings, sympathies, governmental ideas and your image of society. Facebook doesn't want to contradict you at all (Filloux).	✗
When you interact with Facebook, you teach the algorithms about yourself. Those algorithms want to mirror back your beliefs (Filloux).	✓

Each of these tactics should support your summary or analysis: you should integrate quotes, paraphrases, and summary with your own writing. Below, you can see three examples of these tools. Consider how the direct quote, the paraphrase, and the summary each could be used to achieve different purposes.

Example 2

Original Passage

It has been suggested (again rather anecdotally) that giraffes do communicate using infrasonic vocalizations (the signals are verbally described to be similar- in structure and function- to the low-frequency, infrasonic "rumbles" of elephants). It was further speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production. Moreover,

particular neck movements (e.g. the neck stretch) are suggested to be associated with the production of infrasonic vocalizations.[68]

Quote	Paraphrase	Summary
Some zoological experts have pointed out that the evidence for giraffe hums has been "rather anecdotally" reported (Baotic et al. 3). However, some scientists have "speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production" (Ibid 3).	Giraffes emit a low-pitch noise; some scientists believe that this *hum* can be used for communication with other members of the social group, but others are skeptical because of the dearth of research on giraffe noises. According to Baotic et al.. the anatomy of the animal suggests that they may be making deliberate and specific noises (3).	Baotic et al. conducted a study on giraffe hums in response to speculation that these noises are used deliberately for communication.

The examples above also demonstrate additional citation conventions worth noting:

- A parenthetical in-text citation is used for all three forms. (In MLA format, this citation includes the author's last name and page number.) The purpose of an in-text citation is to identify key information that guides your reader to your Works Cited page (or Bibliography or References, depending on your format).
- If you use the author's name in the sentence, you do not need to include their name in the parenthetical citation.
- If your material doesn't come from a specific page or page range, but rather from the entire text, you do not need to include a page number in the parenthetical citation.
- If there are many authors (generally more than three), you can use "et al." to mean "and others."
- If you cite the same source consecutively in the same paragraph (without citing any other sources in between), you can use "lbid." to mean "same as the last one."

In Chapter Six, we will discuss integrating quotes, summaries, and paraphrases into your text wrestling analysis. Especially if you are writing a summary that requires you to use direct quotes, I encourage you to jump ahead to "Synthesis: Using Evidence to Explore Your Thesis" in that chapter.

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3.4.2: Model Texts by Student Authors

Model Texts by Student Authors

Maggie as the Focal Point[69]

Shanna Greene Benjamin attempts to resolve Toni Morrison's emphasis on Maggie in her short story "Recitatif". While many previous scholars focus on racial codes, and "the black-and-white" story that establishes the racial binary, Benjamin goes ten steps further to show "the brilliance of Morrison's experiment" (Benjamin 90). Benjamin argues that Maggie's story which is described through Twyla's and Roberta's memories is the focal point of "Recitatif" where the two protagonists have a chance to rewrite "their conflicting versions of history" (Benjamin 91). More so, Maggie is the interstitial space where blacks and whites can engage, confront America's racialized past, rewrite history, and move forward.

Benjamin highlights that Maggie's story is first introduced by Twyla, labeling her recollections as the "master narrative" (Benjamin 94). Although Maggie's story is rebutted with Roberta's memories, Twyla's version "represent[s] the residual, radicalized perspectives" stemming from America's past (Benjamin 89). Since Maggie is a person with a disability her story inevitably becomes marginalized, and utilized by both Twyla and Roberta for their own self-fulfilling needs, "instead of mining a path toward the truth" (Benjamin 97). Maggie is the interstitial narrative, which Benjamin describes as a space where Twyla and Roberta, "who represent opposite ends of a racial binary", can come together to heal (Benjamin 101). Benjamin also points out how Twyla remembers Maggie's legs looking "like parentheses" and relates the shape of parentheses, (), to self-reflection (Morrison 141). Parentheses represent that inward gaze into oneself, and a space that needs to be filled with self-reflection in order for one to heal and grow. Twyla and Roberta create new narratives of Maggie throughout the story in order to make themselves feel better about their troubled past. According to Benjamin, Maggie's "parenthetical body" is symbolically the interstitial space that "prompts self-reflection require to ignite healing" (Benjamin 102). Benjamin concludes that Morrison tries to get the readers to engage in America's past by eliminating and taking up the space between the racial binary that Maggie represents.

Not only do I agree with Benjamin's stance on "Recitatif", but I also disapprove of my own critical analysis of "Recitatif." I made the same mistakes that other scholars have made regarding Morrison's story; we focused on racial codes and the racial binary, while completely missing the interstitial space which Maggie represents. Although I did realize Maggie was of some importance, I was unsure why so I decided to not focus on Maggie at all. Therefore, I missed the most crucial message from "Recitatif" that Benjamin hones in on.

Maggie is brought up in every encounter between Twyla and Roberta, so of course it makes sense that Maggie is the focal point in "Reticatif." Twyla and Roberta project themselves onto Maggie, which is why the two women have a hard time figuring out "What the hell happened to Maggie" (Morrision 155). Maggie also has the effect of bringing the two women close together, yet at times causing them to be become more distant. For example, when Twyla and Roberta encounter one another at the grocery store, Twyla brings up the time Maggie fell and the "gar girls laughed at her", while Roberta reminds her that Maggie was in fact pushed down (Morrison 148). Twyla has created a new, "self-serving narrative[]" as to what happened to Maggie instead of accepting what has actually happened, which impedes Twyla's ability to self-reflect and heal (Benjamin 102). If the two women would have taken up the space between them to confront the truths of their past, Twyla and Roberta could have created a "cooperative narrative" in order to mend.

Maggie represents the interstitial space that lies between white and black Americans. I believe that is an ideal space to discuss America's racialized past, learn from one another, and in turn, understand why America is divided as such. If white and black America jumped into the space that Maggie defines, maybe we could move foreward as a country and help one another succeed. When I say "succeed", I am not referring to the "American dream" because that is a false dream created by white America. "Recitatif" is not merely what characteristics define which race, it is much more than. Plus, who cares about race! I want America to be able to benefit and give comfort to every citizen whatever their "race" may be. This is time where we need black and white America to come together and fight the greater evil, which is the corruption within America's government.

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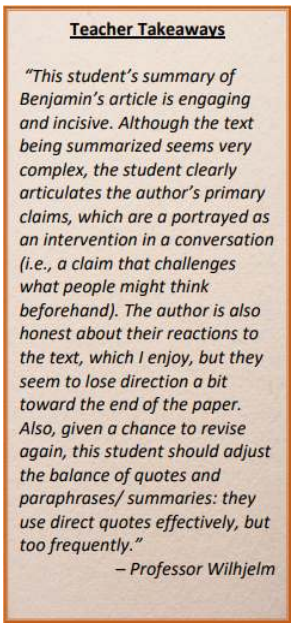

Pronouns & Bathrooms[70]

The article "Pronouns and Bathrooms: Supporting Transgender Students," featured on Edutopia, was written to give educators a few key points when enacting the role of a truly (gender) inclusive educator. It is written specifically to high-school level educators, but I feel that almost all of the rules that should apply to a person who is transgender or gender-expansive at any age or grade level. The information is compiled by several interviews done with past and present high school students who identify with a trans-identity. The key points of advice stated are supported by personal statements made by past or present students that identify with a trans-identity.

The first point of advice is to use the student's preferred name and/or pronoun. These are fundamental to the formation of identity and demand respect. The personal interview used in correlation with the advice details how the person ended up dropping out of high school after transferring twice due to teachers refusing to use their preferred name and pronoun. This is an all-too-common occurrence. The trans community recommend that schools and administrators acquire updated gender-inclusive documentation and update documentation at the request of the student to avoid misrepresentation and mislabeling. When you use the student's preferred name and pronoun in and out of the classroom you are showing the student you sincerely care for their well-being and the respect of their identity.

The second and other most common recommendation is to make "trans-safe" (single-use, unisex, or trans-inclusive) bathrooms widely available to students. Often these facilities either do not exist at all or are few-and-far-between, usually inconveniently located, and may not even meet ADA standards. This is crucial to insuring safety for trans-identified students.

Other recommendations are that schools engage in continual professional development training to insure that teachers are the best advocates for their students. Defend and protect students from physical and verbal abuse. Create a visibly welcoming and supportive environment for trans-identified students by creating support groups, cirriculum and being vocal about your ally status.

The last piece of the article tells us a person who is trans simply wants to be viewed as human- a fully actualized human. I agree wholeheartedly. I believe that everyone has this desire. I agree with the recommendations of the participants that these exhibitions of advocacy are indeed intrinsic to the role of gender-expansive ally-ship,

While they may not be the most salient of actions of advocacy, they are the most foundational parts. These actions are the tip of the iceberg, but they must be respected. Being a true ally to the gender-expansive and transgender communities means continually expanding your awareness of trans issues. I am thankful these conversations are being had and am excited for the future of humanity.

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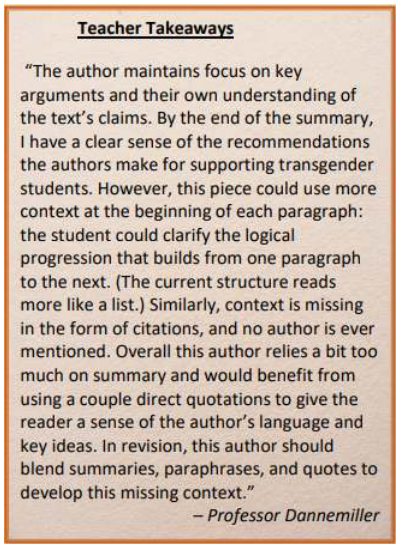

Education Methods: Banking vs. Problem-Posing[71]

Almost every student has had an unpleasant experience with an educator. Many times this happens due to the irrelevant problems posed by educators and arbitrary assignments required of the student. In his chapter from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire centers his argument on the oppressive and unsuccessful banking education method in order to show the necessity of a problem-posing method of education.

Freire begins his argument by intervening into the conversation regarding teaching methods and styles of education, specifically responding to opposition to the banking education method, a method that "mirrors the oppressive society as a whole" (73). He describes the banking method as a system of narration and depositing of information into students like "containers" or "receptacles" (72). He constructs his argument by citing examples of domination and mechanical instruction as aspects that create an assumption of dichotomy, stating that "a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others" (75). Freire draws on the reader's experiences with this method by providing a list of banking attitudes and practices including "the teacher chooses and enforces his choices, and the students comply" (73), thus allowing the reader to connect the subject with their lived experiences.

In response to the banking method, Freire then advocates for a problem-posing method of education comprised of an educator constantly reforming her reflections in the reflection of the students. He theorizes that education involves a constant unveiling of reality, noting that "they come to see world not as a static reality but as a reality in process, in transformation" (83). Thus, the problem-posing method draws on discussion and collaborative communication between students and educator. As they work together, they are able to learn from one another and impact the world by looking at applicable problems and assignments, which is in direct opposition of the banking method.

While it appears that Freire's problem-posing method is more beneficial to both the student and the educator, he fails to take into account the varying learning styles of the students, as well as the teaching abilities of the educators. He states that through the banking method, "the student records, memorizes, and repeats these phrases without perceiving what four times four really means, or realizing the true significance" (71). While this may be true for many students, some have an easier time absorbing information when it is given to them in a more mechanical fashion. The same theory applies to educators as well. Some educators may have a more difficult time communicating through the problem-posing method. Other educators may not be as willing to be a part of a more collaborative education method.

I find it difficult to agree with a universal method of education, due to the fact that a broad method doesn't take into consideration the varying learning and communication styles of both educator and student. However, I do agree with Freire on the basis that learning and education should be a continuous process that involves the dedication of both student and educator. Students are their

own champions and it takes a real effort to be an active participant in one's own life and education. It's too easy to sit back and do the bare minimum, or be an "automaton" (74). To constantly be open to learning and new ideas, to be a part of your own education, is harder, but extremely valuable.

As a student pursing higher education, I find this text extremely reassuring. This current state of the world and education can seem grim at times, but after reading this I feel more confident that there are still people who feel that the current systems set in place are not creating students who can critically think and contribute to the world. Despite being written forty years ago, Freire's radical approach to education seems to be a more humanistic style, one where students are thinking authentically, for "authentic thinking is concerned with reality" (77). Problem-posing education is one that is concerned with liberation, opposed to oppression. The banking method doesn't allow for liberation, for "liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (79). Educational methods should prepare students to be liberators and transformers of the world, not containers to receive and store information.

Works Cited

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Teacher Takeaways

"I love that this student combines multiple forms of information (paraphrases, quotes, and summaries) with their own reactions to the text. By using a combined form of summary, paraphrase, and quote, the student weaves ideas from the text together to give the reader a larger sense of the author's ideas and claims. The student uses citations and signal phrases to remind us of the source. The student also does a good job of keeping paragraphs focused, setting up topic sentences and transitions, and introducing ideas that become important parts of their thesis. On the other hand, the reader could benefit from more explanation of some complex concepts from the text being analyzed, especially if the author assumes that the reader isn't familiar with Freire. For example, the banking method of education is never quite clearly explained and the reader is left to derive its meaning from the context clues the student provides. A brief summary or paraphrase of this concept towards the beginning of the essay would give us a better understanding of the contexts the student is working in."

– Professor Dannemiller

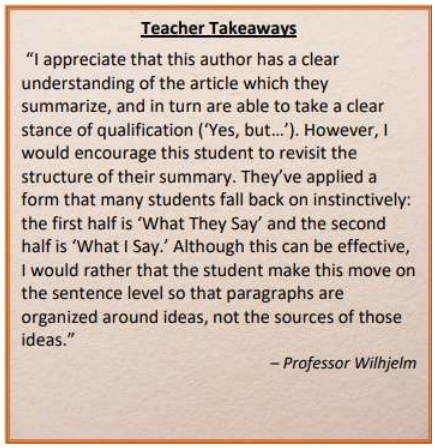
You Snooze, You Peruse[72]

This article was an interesting read about finding a solution to the problem that 62% of high school students are facing- chronic sleep deprivation (less than 8 hours on school nights). While some schools have implemented later start times, this article argues for a more unique approach. Several high schools in Las Cruces, New Mexico have installed sleeping pods for students to use when needed. They "include a reclined chair with a domed sensory-reduction bubble that closes around one's head and torso" and "feature a one-touch start button that activates a relaxing sequence of music and soothing lights" (Conklin). Students rest for 20 minutes and then go back to class. Some of the teachers were concerned about the amount of valuable class time students would miss while napping, while other teachers argued that if the students are that tired, they won't be able to focus in class anyway. Students who used the napping pods reported they were effective in restoring energy levels and reducing stress. While that is great, there is concern from Melissa Moore, a pediatric sleep specialist, that napping during the day would cause students to sleep less during that "all-important nighttime sleep."

Sleep deprivation is a serious issue in high school students. I know there are a lot of high school students that are very involved in extra-curricular activities like I was. I was on student council and played sports yea-round, which meant most night I got home late, had hours of homework, and almost never got enough sleep. I was exhausted all the time, especially during junior and senior year. I definitely agree that there is no point in students sitting in class if they're so tired they can barely stay awake. However, I don't know if sleeping pods are the best solution. Sure, after a 20-minute nap students feel a little more energetic, but I don't think this is solving the chronic issue of sleep deprivation. A 20-minute nap isn't solving the problem that most students aren't getting 8 hours of sleep, which means they aren't getting enough deep sleep (which usually occurs between hours 6-8). Everyone needs these critical hours of sleep, especially those that are still growing and whose brains are still developing. I think it would be much more effective to implement later start times. High school students aren't going to go to bed earlier, that's just the way it is. But having later start times gives them the opportunity to get up to an extra hour of sleep, which can make a huge difference in the overall well-being of students, as well as their level of concentration and focus in the classroom.

Works Cited

Conklin, Richard, "You Snooze, You Peruse: Some Schools Turn to Nap Time to Recharge Students." *Education World*, 2017, www.educationworld.com/a_news/you-snooze-you-peruse-some-schools-turn-naptime-recharge-students-33819787.



Bloom, Benjamin S., et al. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*. D. McKay Co., 1969.

Also of note are recent emphasis to use Bloom's work as a conceptual model, not a hard-and-fast, infallible rule for cognition. Importantly, we rarely engage only one kind of thinking, and models liek this should not be used to make momentous decisions; rather, they should contribute to a broader, nuanced understanding of human cognition and development. In consideration of revised versions Bloom's Taxonomy and the previous note, it can be mentioned that this process necessarily involves judgment/evaluation; using the process of interpretation, my analysis and synthesis require my intellectual discretion.

Mays 1258.

Mays, Kelly J. "The Literature Essay." T*he Norton Introduction to Literature*, Portable 12th edition, Norton, 2017, pp. 1255-1278.

“Developing a Thesis.” Purdue OWL, Purdue University, 2014, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/616/02/. [Original link has expired. See Purdue OWL’s updated version: Developing a Thesis]

Read more advice from the Purdue OWL relevant to close reading at https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/4/17/ .

One particularly useful additional resource is the text “Annoying Ways People Use Sources,” externally linked in the Additional Recommended Resources appendix of this book.

Gallop 7.

Essay by an anonymous student author, 2014. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

This essay is a synthesis of two students’ work. One of those students is Ross Reaume, Portland State University, 2014, and the other student wishes to remain anonymous. Reproduced with permission from the student authors.

Essay by Marina, who has requested her last name not be included. Portland Community College, 2018. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

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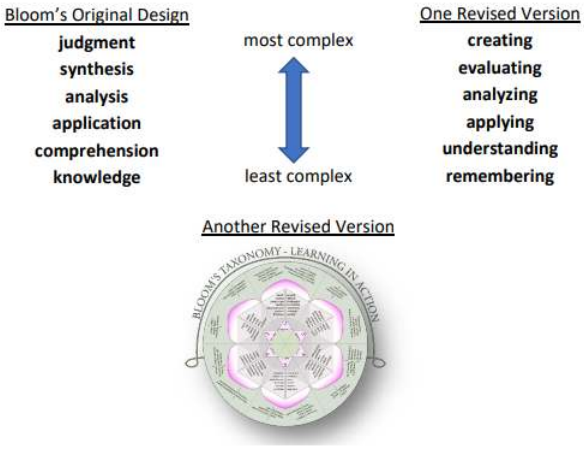
3.5: Analysis and Synthesis

Section Introduction- Analysis and Synthesis

What does it mean to *know* something? How would you explain the process of thinking? In the 1950s, educational theorist Benjamin Bloom proposed that human cognition, thinking, and knowing, could be classified by six categories.[73] Hierarchically arranged in order of complexity, these steps were:

Since his original model, the taxonomy has been revised, as illustrated in the diagram below:



(click to enlarge)

- Each word is an action verb instead of a noun (e.g., "applying" instead of "application");
- Some words have been changed for different synonyms;
- One version holds "creating" above "evaluating";
- And, most importantly, other versions are reshaped into a circle, as pictured above.[74]

What do you think the significance of these changes is?

I introduce this model of cognition to contextualize **analysis** as a cognitive tool which can work in tandem with other cognitive tasks and behaviors. Analysis is most commonly used alongside **synthesis**. To proceed with the LEGO® example from Chapter 4, consider my taking apart the castle as an act of analysis. I study each face of each block intently, even those parts that I can't see when the castle is fully constructed. In the process of synthesis, I bring together certain blocks from the castle to instead build something else- let's say, a racecar. By unpacking and interpreting each *part*, I'm able to build a new *whole*.[75]

In a text wrestling essay, you're engaging in a process very similar to my castle-to-racecar adventure. You'll encounter a text and unpack it attentively, looking closely at each piece of language, it's arrangement, it's significance, and then use it to build an insightful, critical insight about the original text. I might not use every original block, but by exploring the relationship of part-to-whole, I better understand how the castle *is* a castle. In turn, i am better positioned to act as a sort of tour guide for the castle or a mechanic for the racecar, able to show my readers what about the castle or racecar is important and to explain how it works.

":jovian:" by bf8done is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0 "lego pile" by justgrimes is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 "Brick Head" by DSC_0119 is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Diagram: arrows indicatiing progression from a LEGO castle to a pile of LEGO bricks to a LEGO racecar.

In this chapter, you'll learn about crafting a thesis for a text wrestling essay and using **evidence** to support that **thesis**. As you will discover, an analytical essay involves every tier of Bloom's Taxonomy, arguably even including "judgement" because your thesis will present an interpretation that is evidence-based and arguable.

Chapter Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Definition
analysis	the cognitive process and/or rhetorical mode of studying constituent parts to demonstrate an interpretation of a larger whole.
evidence	a part or combination of parts that lends support or proof to an arguable topic, idea, or interpretation
synthesis	a cognitive and rhetorical process by which an author brings together parts of a larger whole to create a unique new product. Examples of synthesis might include an analytical essay, found poetry, or a mashup/remix.
Thesis (statement)	a 1-3 sentence statement outlining the main insight(s), argument(s), or concern(s) of an essay; not necessary in every rhetorical situation; typically found at the beginning of an essay, though sometimes embedded later in the paper. Also referred to as a "So what?" statement.

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3.5.1: Techniques

Techniques

So What? Turning Observations into a Thesis

It's likely that you've heard the term "thesis statement" multiple times in your writing career. Even though you may have some idea what a thesis entails already, it is worth reviewing and unpacking the expectations surrounding a thesis, specifically in a text wrestling essay.

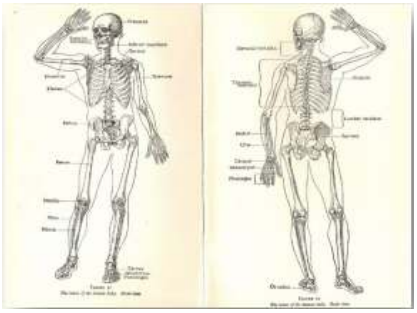
A **thesis statement** is a central, unifying insight that drives your analysis or argument. In a typical college essay, this insight should be articulated in one to three sentences, placed within the introductory paragraph or section. As we'll see below, this is not *always* the case, but it is what many of your audiences will expect. To put it simply, a thesis is the "So what?" of an analytical or persuasive essay. It answers your audience when they ask, Why does your writing matter? What bigger insights does it yield about the subject of analysis? About our world?

Thesis statements in most rhetorical situations advocate for a certain vision of a text, phenomenon, reality, or policy. Good thesis statements support such a vision using evidence and thinking that confirms, clarifies, demonstrates, nuances, or otherwise relates to that vision. In other words, a thesis is "a proposition that you *can* prove with evidence..., yet it's one you *have* to prove, that isn't obviously true or merely factual."[76]

In a text wrestling analysis, a thesis pushes beyond basic summary and observation. In other words, it's difference between:

Observation	Thesis
What does the text say?	*What do I have to say about the text?*
I noticed _____	I noticed _____ and it means _____ I noticed _____ and it matters because _____.

If you think of your essay as the human body, the thesis is the spine. Yes, the body can still exist without a spine, but its functionings will be severely limited. Furthermore, everything comes back to and radiates out from the spine: trace back from your fingertips to your backbone and consider how they relate. In turn, each paragraph should tie back to your thesis, offering support and clear connections so your reader can see the entire "body" of your essay. In this way, a thesis statement serves two purposes: it is not only about the *ideas* of your paper, but also the *structure*.



"Vintage ephemera" by HA! Designs - Artbyheather is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)[77] suggests this specific process for developing your thesis statement:

1. Once you've read the story or novel closely, look back over your notes for patterns of questions or ideas that interest you. Have most of your questions been about characters, how they develop or change?

In addition to capturing the central, unifying insight of your essay, your thesis also acts as a "road map." It anticipates both content and structure.

Example 1:

If you are reading Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, do you seem to be most interested in what the author has to say about society? Choose a pattern of ideas and express it in the form of a question and an answer such as the following:

Question: What does Conrad seem to be suggesting about early twentieth-century London society in his novel *The Secret Agent*?

Answer

Conrad suggests that all classes of society are corrupt.

Pitfalls:

Choosing too many ideas

Choosing an idea without any support.

2. Once you have some general points to focus on, write your possible ideas and answer the questions that they suggest.

Example 2:

Question: How does Conrad develop the idea that all classes of society are corrupt?

Answer:

He uses images of beasts and cannabilism whether he's describing socialities, policemen, or secret agents.

3. To write your thesis statement, all you have to do is turn the question and answer around. You've already given the answer, now just put it in a sentence (or a couple of sentences) so that the thesis of your paper is clear.

Example 3:

In his novel, *The Secret Agent*, Conrad uses beast and cannibal imagery to describe the characters and their relationships. This pattern of images suggests that Conrad saw corruption in every level of early twentieth-century London society.

4. Now that you're familiar with the story or novel and have developed a thesis statement, you're ready to choose the evidence you'll use to support your thesis. There are a lot of good ways to do this, but all of them depend on a strong thesis for their direction.

Example 4

Here's a student's thesis about Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*.

In his novel, The Secret Agent, Conrad uses beast and cannibal imagery to describe the characters and their relationships to each other. This pattern of images suggests that Conrad saw corruption in every level of early twentieth-century London society.

This thesis focuses on the idea of social corruption and the device of imagery. To support this thesis, you would need to find images of beasts and cannibalism within the text.

There are many ways to write a thesis, and your construction of a thesis statement will become more intuitive and nuanced as you become a more confident and competent writer. However, there are a few tried-and-true strategies that I'll share with you over the next few pages.

Your thesis statement can and should evolve as you continue writing your paper.
Often, I prefer to think of a thesis instead as a (hypo)thesis—an informed estimation of how you think your analysis will come together.

The T3 Strategy

T3 is a formula to create a thesis statement. The T (for Thesis) should be the point you're trying to make- the "So what?" In a text wrestling analysis, you are expected to advocate for a certain interpretation of a text: this is your "So what?" Examples might include:

Example 5

In "A Wing from the North," Bill Capossere conveys the loneliness of isolated life

or

Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" suggests that marriage can be oppressive to women

But wait- there's more! In a text wrestling analysis, your interpretation must be based on evidence from that text. Therefore, your thesis should identify both a focused statement of the interpretation (the whole) and also the particular subjects of your observation (the partsof the text you will focus on support that interpretation). A complete T3 thesis statement for a text wrestling analysis might look more like this:

Example 6

In "A Wing from the North," Bill Capossere conveys the loneliness of an isolated lifestyle using the motif of snow, the repeated phrase "five or six days" (104), and the symbol of his uncle's car.

or

"The Story of an Hour" suggests that marriage can be oppressive to women. To demonstrate this theme, Kate Chopin integrates irony, foreshadwoing, and symbols of freedom in the story.

Notice the way the T3 allows for the part-to-whole thinking that underlies analysis:

Whole **(T)**	Parts **(3)**
Bill Capossere conveys the loneliness of an isolated lifestyle	the motif of snow
	the repeated phrase “five or six days” (104)
	the symbol of his uncle’s car.
“The Story of an Hour” suggests that marriage can be oppressive to women	irony
	foreshadowing
	symbols of freedom

This is also a useful strategy because it can provide structure for your paper: each justifying support for your thesis should be one section of your paper.

I. Introduction

a. Thesis: In "A Wind from the North," Bill Capossere conveys the loneliness of an isolated lifestyle using the motif of snow, the repeated phrase "five or six days" (104), and the symbol of his uncle's car.

II. Section on 'the motif of snow.'

Topic sentence: The recurring imagery of snow creates a tone of frostiness and demonstrates the passage of time.

III. Section on 'the repeated phrase "five or six days" (104).'

Topic sentence: When Capossere repeats "five or six days" (104), he reveals the ambiguity of death in a life not lived.

IV. Section on 'the symbol of his uncle's car.'

Topic sentence: Finally, Capossere's uncle's car is symbolic of his lifestyle.

V. Conclusion

Once you've developed a T3 statement, you can revise it to make it feel less formulaic. For example:

Example 7

In "A Wind from the North," Bill Capossere conveys the loneliness of an isolated lifestyle by symbolizing his uncle with a "untouchable" car. Additionally, he repeats images and phrases in the essay to reinforce his uncle's isolation.

or

"The Story of an Hour," a short story by Kate Chopin, uses a plot twist to imply that marriage can be oppressive to women. The symbols of freedom in the story create a feeling of joy, but the attentive reader will recognize the imminent irony.

The O/P Strategy

An occassion/position thesis statement is rhetorically convincing because it explains the relvance of your argument and concisely articulates that argument. Although you should already have your position in mind, your rhetorical occassion will lead this statement off: what sociohistorical conditons make your writing timely, relevant, applicable? Continuing with the previous examples:

Example 8

As our society moves from individualism to isolationism, Bill Capossere's "A Wind from the North" is a salient example of a life lived alone.

or

Alothough Chopin's story was written over 100 years ago, it still provides insight to gender dynamics in American marriages.

Following your occasion, state your position- agaion, this is your "So What?" It is wise to include at least some preview of the parts you will be examining.

Example 9

As our society moves from individualism to isolationism, Bill Capossere's "A Wind from the North" is a salient example of a life lived alone. Using recurring images and phrases, Capossere conveys the loneliness of his uncle leading up to his death

or

Although Chopin's story was written over 100 years ago, it still provides insight to gender dynamics in American marriages. "The Story of an Hour" reminds us that marraige has historically meant a surrender of freedom for women.

Research Question and Embedded Thesis

There's one more commons style of thesis construction that's worth noting, and that's the inquiry-based thesis. (Read more about inquiry-based research writing in Chapter Eight). For this thesis, you'll develop an incisive and focused question which you'll explore throughout the course of the esaay. By the end of the essay, you will be able to offer an answer (perhaps a complicated or incomplete answer, but still some kind of answer) to the question. This form is also referred to as the "embedded thesis" or "delayed thesis" organization.

Although this model of thesis *can* be effectively applied in a text wrestling essay, it is often more effective when combined with one of the other methods above.

Consider the following examples:

Example 10

Bill Capossere's essay "A Wind from the North" suggests that isolation results in sorrow and loneliness; is this always the case? How does Capossere create such a vision of his uncle's life?

or

Many people would believe that Kate Chopin's story reflects an outdated perception of marriage- but can "The Story of an Hour" reveal power imbalances in modern relationships, too?

You may note that these three thesis strategies can be combined to create nuanced and attention-grabbing thesis statements.

Synthesis: Using Evidence to Explore Your Thesis

Now that you've considered what your analytical insight might be (articulated in the form of a thesis), it's time to bring evidence in to support your analysis- this is the **synthesis** part of Bloom's Taxonomy earlier in this chapter. Synthesis refers to the creation of a new while (an interpretation) using smaller parts (evidence from the text you've analyzed).

There are essentially two ways to go about collecting and culling relevant support from the text with which you're wrestling. In my experience, students are split about evenly on which option is better for them:

Option #1: Before writing your thesis, while you're reading and rereading your text, annotate the page and take notes. Copy down quotes, images, formal features, and themes that are striking, exciting, or relatable. Then, try to group your collection of evidence according to common traits. Once you've done so, choose one or two groups on which to base your thesis.

or

Option #2: After writing your thesis, revisit the text looking for quotes, images, and themes that support, elaborate, or explain your interpretation. Record these quotes, and then return to the drafting process.

Once you've gathered evidence from your focus text, you should weave quotes, paraphrases, and summaries into your own writing. A common misconception is that you should write "around" your evidence, i.e. choosing the direct quote you want to use and building a paragraph around it. Instead, you should *foreground* your interpretation and analysis, using evidence in the *background* to explore and support that interpretation. Lead with your idea, then demonstrate it with evidence; then, explain how your evidence demonstrates your idea.

The appropriate ratio of evidence (their writing) to exposition (your writing) will vary depending on your rhetorical situation, but I advise my students to spend at least as many words unpacking a quote as that quote contains. (I'm referring here to Step #4 in the table below.) For example, if you use a direct quote of 25 words, you out to spend at least 25 words explaining how that quote supports or nuances your interpretation.

There are infinite ways to bring evidence into your discussion, [78] but for now, let's take a look at a formula that many students find productive as they find their footing in analytical wiriting: Front-load + Quote/Paraphrase/Summarize + Cite + Example/elaborate/analyze.

1. front-load (1-2 sentences)	+	2. quote, paraphrase, or summarize	+	3. (cite)	+	4. explain, elaborate, analyze (2-3 sentences)
Set your reader up for the quote using a signpost (also known as a signal phrase; see Chapter Nine). Don't drop quotes in abruptly: by front-loading, you can guide your reader's interpretation.		Use whichever technique is relevant to your rhetorical purpose at that exact point.		Use an in-text citation appropriate to your discipline. It doesn't matter if you quote, paraphrase, or summarize—all three require a citation.		Perhaps most importantly, you need to make the value of this evidence clear to the reader. What does it mean? How does it further your thesis?

What might this look like in practice?

The recurring imagery of snow creates a tone of frostiness and demonstrates the passage of time. (1) Snow brings to mind connotations of wintery cold, quiet, and death (2) as a "sky of utter clarity and simplicity" lingers over his uncle's home and "it [begins] once more to snow" ((3) Capossere 104). (4) Throughout his essay, Capossere returns frequently to weather imagery, but snow especially, to play on associations the reader has. In this line, snow sets the tone by wrapping itself in with "clarity," a state of mind. Even though the narrator still seems ambivalent about his uncle, this clarity suggests that he is reflecting with a new and somber understanding.

1. Front-load

Snow brings to mind connotations of wintery cold, quiet, and death

2. Quote

as a "sly of utter clarity and simplicity" lingers over his uncle's home and "it [begins] once more to snow"

3. Cite

(Capossere 104)

4. Explain/elaborate/analysis

Throughout his essay, Capossere returns frequently to weather imagery, but snow especially, to play on associations the reader has. In this line, snow sets the tone by wrapping itself with "clarity," a state of mind. Even though the narrator still seems ambivalent about his uncle, this clarity suggests that he is reflecting with a new and somber understanding.

This might feel formulaic and forced at first, but following these steps will ensure that you give each piece of evidence between two slices of your own language and interpretation.

"The Biology of Human Sex Differences" by Reuben Strayer is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

For more on front-loading (readerly signposts or signal phrases), see the subsection titled "Readerly Signposts" in Chapter Nine.

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3.5.2: Activities

Activities

Idea Generation: Close Reading Graphic Organizer

The first time you read a text, you most likely will not magically stumble upon a unique, inspiring insight to pursue as a thesis. As discussed earlier in this section, close reading is an iterative process, which means that you must repeatedly encounter a text (reread, re-watch, re-listen, etc.) trying to challenge it, interrogate it, and gradually develop a working thesis.

Very often, the best way to practice analysis is collaboratively, through discussion. Because other people will necessarily provide different perspectives through their unique interpretive positions, reading groups can help you grow your analysis. By discussing a text, you open yourself up to more nuanced and unanticipated interpretations influenced by your peers. Your teacher might ask you to work in small groups to complete the following graphic organizer in response to a certain text. (You can also complete this exercise independently, but it might no yield the same results.)

Exercise 1

Title and Author of Text:	Group Members' Names:

6) Start by "wading" back through the text. Remind yourself of the general idea and annotate important words, phrases, and passages.

5. As a group, discuss and explain: What could the meaning or message of this text be? What ideas does the text communicate? (Keep in mind, there are an infinite number of "right" answers here.)

6. What patterns do you see in the text (e.g., repetition of words, phrases, sentences, or images; ways that the text is structured)? What breaks in the patterns do you see? What is the effect of these patterns and breaks of pattern?

7. What symbols and motifs do you see in the text? What might they represent? What is the effect of these symbols? What themes do they cultivate or gesture to?

8. What references do you see in the text? Does the author allude to, quote, imitate, or parody another text, film, song, etc.? Does the author play on connotations? What is the effect of these references?

https://human.libretexts.org/@go/page/271727

9. What about this text surprises you? What do you get hung up on? Consider Jane Gallop's brief list from "The Ethics of Reading: Close Encounters" –

> (1) unusual vocabulary, words that surprise either because they are unfamiliar or because they seem to belong to a different context; (2) words that seem unnecessarily repeated, as if the word keeps insisting on being written; (3) images or metaphors, especially ones that are used repeatedly and are somewhat surprising given the context; (4) what is in italics or parentheses; and (5) footnotes that seem too long[79]

– but also anything else that strikes you as a reader.

10. Analytical lenses: Do you see any of the following threads represented in the work? What evidence of these ideas do you see? How do these parts contribute to a whole?

Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality	Gender and Sexuality

Disability	Social Class and Economy
Ecologies and the Environment	(Post)colonialism

Thesis Builder

Your thesis statement can and should evolve as you continue writing your paper: teachers will often refer to a thesis as a "working thesis" because the revision process should include tweaking, pivoting, focusing, expanding, and/or rewording your thesis. The exercise on the next two pages, though, should help you develop a working thesis to begin your project. Following the examples, identify the components of your analysis that might contribute to a thesis statement.

Your approach to building a thesis will depend on your rhetorical mode; for instance, an analytical thesis (like this one), might not be most appropriate for a persuasive, expository, or research essay.

✔ Example 1

Topic (Name your focus text and its author)	Ex.: "A Wind from the North" by Bill Capossere
Analytical focus (Identify at least one *part* of the *whole* you're studying)	Ex.: Repeated phrase "five or six days" (104) Symbol – uncle's car Motif – snow
Analytical insight (Explain the function of that *part* in relationship to the *whole*)	Ex.: They imply that living in isolation makes you lonely **(continued on next page)**

Stakes (So what? Why does it matter?)	Ex.: Sheds light on the fragility of life and the relationships we build throughout it.
Consider adding... • A concession statement ("Although," "even though," etc.) Ex.: Although there's nothing wrong with preferring time alone, … • A question that you might pursue Ex.: Can Capossere's uncle represent other isolated people?	
THESIS: Ex.: Although there's nothing wrong with preferring time alone, "A Wind from the North" by Bill Capossere sheds light on the fragility of life and the relationships we build throughout it. The text conveys the loneliness of an isolated lifestyle by symbolizing Capossere's uncle with a "untouchable" car. Additionally, the narrator repeats images and phrases in the essay to reinforce his uncle's isolation.	

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3.5.3: Model Texts by Student Authors

Model Texts by Student Authors

Songs[80]

(A text wrestling analysis of "Proofs" by Richard Rodriguez)

Songs are culturally important. In the short story "Proofs" by Richard Rodriguez, a young Mexican American man comes to terms with his bi-cultural life. This young man's father came to America from a small and poverty-stricken Mexican village. The young man flashes from his story to his father's story in order to explore his Mexican heritage and American life. Midway through the story Richard Rodriguez utilizes the analogies of songs to represent the cultures and how they differ. Throughout the story there is a clash of cultures. Because culture can be experienced through the arts and teachings of a community, Rodriguez uses the songs of the two cultures to represent the protagonist's bi-cultural experience.

According to Rodriguez, the songs that come from Mexico express an emotional and loving culture and community: "By my mama says there are no songs like the love songs of Mexico" (50). The songs from that culture can be beautiful. It is amazing the love and beauty that come from social capital and community involvement. The language Richard Rodriguez uses to explain these songs is beautiful as well. "-it is the raw edge of sentiment" (51). The author explains how it is the men who keep the songs. No matter how stoic the men are, they have an outlet to express their love and pain as well as every emotion in between. "The cry of a Jackal under the moon, the whistle of a phallus, the maniacal song of the skull" (51). This outlet is an outlet for men to express themselves that is not prevalent in American culture. The songs from the American culture are different. In America the songs get lost. There is assimilation of cultures. The songs of Mexico are important to the protagonist of the story. There is a clash between the old culture in Mexico and the subject's new American life represented in these songs.

A few paragraphs later in the story, on page 52, the author tells us the difference in the American song. America sings a different tune. America is the land of opportunity. It represents upward mobility and the ability to "make it or break it." But it seems there is a cost for all this material gain and all this opportunity. There seems to be a lack of love and emotion, a lack of the ability to express pain and all other feelings, the type of emotion which is expressed in the songs of Mexico. The songs of America say, "You can be anything you want to be" (52). The song represents the American Dream. The cost seems to be the loss of compassion, love, and emotion that is expressed through the songs of Mexico. There is no outlet quite the same for the stoic men of America. Rodriguez explains how the Mexican migrant workers have all that pain and desire, all that emotion penned up inside until it explodes in violent outbursts. "Or they would come into town on Monday nights for the wrestling matches or on Tuesdays for boxing. They worked over in Yolo County. They were men without women. They were Mexicans without Mexico" (49). Rodriguez uses the language in the story almost like a song in order to portray the culture of the American dream. The phrase "I will send for you or I will come home rich," is repeated twice throughout the story. The gain for all this loss of love and compassion is the dream of financial gain. "You have come into the country on your knees with your head down. You are a man" (48). That is the allure of the American Dream.

The protagonist of the story was born in America. Throughout the story he is looking at this illusion of the American Dream through a different frame. He is also trying to come to terms with his own manhood in relation to his American life and Mexican heritage. The subject has the ability to see the two songs in a different light. "The city will win. The city sings mean songs, dirty songs" (52). Part of the subject's reconciliation process with himself is seeing that all the material stuff that is dangled as part of the American Dream is not worth the love and emotion that is held in the old Mexican villages and expressed in their songs.

Rodriguez represents this conflict of culture on page 53. The protagonist of the story is taking pictures during the arrest of illegal border-crossers. "I stare at the faces. They stare at me. To them I am not bearing witness; I am part of the process of being arrested" (53). The subject is torn between the two cultures in a hazy middle ground. He is not one of the migrants and he is not one of the police. He is there taking pictures of the incident with a connection to both of the groups and both of the groups see him connected with the others.

The old Mexican villages are characterized by a *lack of:* "Mexico is poor" (50). However, this is not the reason for the love and emotion that is held. The thought that people have more love and emotion because they are poor is a misconception. There are both rich people and poor people who have multitudes of love and compassion. The defining elements in creating love and emotion for

each other comes from the level of community interaction and trust- the ability to sing these love songs and express emotion towards one another. People who become caught up in the American Dream tend to be obsessed with their own personal gain. This diminishes the social interaction and trust between fellow humans. There is no outlet in the culture of America quite the same as singing love songs towards each other. It does not matter if they are rich or poor, lack of community, trust, and social interaction; lack of songs can lead to lack of love and emotion that is seen in the old songs of Mexico.

The image of the American Dream is bright and shiny. To a young boy in a poor village the thought of power and wealth can dominate over a life of poverty with love and emotion. However, there is poverty in America today as well as in Mexico. The poverty here looks like a little different but many migrants and young men find the American Dream to be an illusion. "Most immigrants to America came from villages. The America that Mexicans find today, at the decline of the century, is a closed-circuit city of ramps and dark towers, a city without God. The city is evil. Turn. Turn" (50). The song of America sings an inviting tune for young men from poor villages. When they arrive though it is not what they dreamed about. The subject of the story can see this. He is trying to come of age in his own way, acknowledging America and the Mexico of old. He is able to look back and forth in relation to the America his father came to for power and wealth and the America that he grew up in. All the while, he watches this migration of poor villages, filled with love and emotion, to a big heartless city, while referring back to his father's memory of why he came to America and his own memories of growing up in America. "Like wandering Jews. They carried their home with them, back and forth: they had no true home but the tabernacle of memory" (51). The subject of the story is experiencing all of this conflict of culture and trying to compose his own song.

Works Cited

Rodriguez, Richard. "Proofs." *In Short: A Collection of Brief Creative Nonfiction*, edited by Judith Kitchen and Mary Paumier Jones, Norton, 1996, pp. 48-54.

Teacher Takeaways

"The student clearly states their thesis in the beginning, threading it through the essay, and further developing it through a synthesized conclusion. The student's ideas build logically through the essay via effective quote integration: the student sets up the quote, presents it clearly, and then responds to the quote with thorough analysis that links it back to their primary claims. At times this thread is a bit difficult to follow; as one example, when the student talks about the text's American songs, it's not clear how Rodriguez's text illuminates the student's thesis. Nor is it clear why the student believes Rodriguez is saying the "American Dream is not worth the love and emotion." Without this clarification, it's difficult to follow some of the connections the student relies on for their thesis, so at times it seems like they may be stretching their interpretation beyond what the text supplies."

– Professor Dannemiller

Normal Person: An Analysis of the Standards of Normativity in "A Plague of Tics"[81]

David Sedaris' essay "A Plague of Tics" describes the Sedaris' psychological struggles he encountered in his youth, expressed through obsessive-compulsive tics. These abnormal behaviors heavily inhibited his functionings, but more importantly, isolated and embarrassed him during his childhood, adolescence, and young adult years. Authority figures in his life would mock him openly, and he constantly struggled to perform routine simple tasks in a timely manner, solely due to the amount of time that needed to be set aside for carrying out these compulsive tics. He lacked the necessary social support an adolescent requires because of his apparent abnormality. But when we look at the behaviors of his parents, as well as the socially acceptable tics of our society more generally, we see how Sedaris' tics are in fact not too different, if not less harmful than those of the society around him. By

exploring Sedaris' isolation, we can discover that socially constructed standards of normativity are at best arbitrary, and at worst violent.

As a young boy, Sedaris is initially completely unaware that his tics are not socially acceptable in the outside world. He is puzzled when his teacher, Miss Chestnut, correctly guesses that he is "going to hit [himself] over the head with [his] shoe" (361), despite the obvious removal of his shoe during their private meeting. Miss Chestnut continues by embarrassingly making fun out of the fact that Sedaris' cannot help but "bathe her light switch with [his] germ-ridden tongue" (361) repeatedly throughout the school day. She targets Sedaris with mocking questions, putting him on the spot in front of his class; this behavior is not ethical due to Sedaris' age. It violates the trust that students should have in their teachers and other caregivers. Miss Chestnut criticizes him excessively for his ambiguous, child-like answers. For example, she drills him on whether it is "healthy to hit ourselves over the head with our shoes" (361) and he "guess[es] that it was not," (361) as a child might praise it. She ridicules his use of the term "guess," using obvious examples of instances when guessing would not be appropriate, such as "[running] into traffic with a paper sack over [her] head" (361). Her mockery is not only rude, but ableist and unethical. Any teacher- at least nowadays- should recognize that Sedaris needs compassion and support, not emotional abuse.

These kinds of negative responses to Sedaris' behavior continue upon his return home, in which the role of the insensitive authority figure is taken on by his mother. In a time when maternal support is crucial for a secure and confident upbringing, Sedaris' mother was never understanding of his behavior, and left little room for open, honest discussion regarding ways to cope with his compulsiveness. She reacted harshly to the letter sent home by Miss Chestnut, nailing Sedaris, exclaiming that his "goddamned math teacher" (363) noticed his strange behaviors, as if it should have been obvious to young, egocentric Sedaris. When teachers like Miss Chestnut meet with her to discuss young David's problems, she makes fun of him, imitating his compulsions; Sedaris is struck by "a sharp, stinging sense of recognition" upon viewing this mockery (365). Sedaris' mother, too, is an authority figure who maintains ableist standards of normativity by taunting her own son. Meeting with teachers should be an opportunity to truly help David, not tease him.

On the day that Miss Chestnut makes her appearance in the Sedaris household to discuss his behaviors with his mother, Sedaris watches them from the staircase, helplessly embarrassed. We can infer from this scene that Sedaris has actually become aware of that fact that his tics are not considered to be socially acceptable, and that he must be "the wierd kid" among his peers- and even to his parents and teachers. his mother's cavalier derision demonstrates her apparent disinterest in the well-being of he son, as she blatantly brushes off his strange behaviors except in the instance during which she can put them on display for the purpose of entertaining a crowd. What all of these pieces of his mother's flawed personality show us is that she has issues too- drinking and smoking, in addition to her poor mothering- but yet Sedaris is the one being chastised while she lives a normal life. Later in the essay, Sedaris describes how "a blow to the nose can be positively narcotic" (366), drawing a parallel to his mother's drinking and smoking. From this comparison, we can begin to see flawed standards of "normal behavior": although many people drink and smoke (especially at the time the story takes place), these habits are much more harmful than what Sedaris does in private.

Sedaris' father has an equally harmful personality, but it manifests differently. Sedaris describes him as a hoarder, one who has, "saved it all: every last Green Stamp and coupon, every outgrown bathing suit and scrap of linoleum" (365). Sedaris' father attempts to "cure [Sedaris] with a series of threats" (366). In one scene, he even enacts violence upon David by slamming on the brakes of the car while David has his nose pressed against a windshield. Sedaris reminds us that his behavior might have been unusual, but it wasn't violent: "So what if I wanted to touch my nose to the windshield? Who was I hurting?" (366). In fact, it is in that very scene that Sedaris draws the aforementioned parallel to his mother's drinking: when Sedaris discovers that "a blow to the nose can be positively narcotic," it is while his father is driving around "with a lapful of rejected, out-of-state coupons" (366). Not only is Sedaris' father violating the trust David places in him as a caregiver; his hoarding is an arguably unhealthy habit that simply happens to be more socially acceptable than licking a concrete toadstool. Comparing Sedaris's tics to his father's issues, it is apparent that his father's are much more harmful than his own. None of the adults in Sedaris' life are innocent-"mother smokes and Miss Chestnut massaged her waist twenty, thirty times a day- and here *I* couldn't press my nose against the windshield of a car" (366)- but nevertheless, Sedaris's problems are ridiculed or ignored by the 'normal' people in his life, again bringing into question what it means to be a normal person.

In high school, Sedaris' begins to take certain measures to actively control and hide his socially unacceptable behaviors. "For a time," he says, "I thought that if I accompanied my habits with an outlandish wardrobe, I might be viewed as eccentric rather than just plain retarded" (369). Upon this notion, Sedaris starts to hang numerous medallions around his neck, reflecting that he "might

as well have worn a cowbell" (369) due to the obvious noises they made when he would jerk his head violently, drawing more attention to his behaviors (the opposite of the desired effect). He also wore large glasses, which he now realizes made it easier to observe his habit of rolling his eyes into his head, and "clunky platform shoes [that] left lumps when used to discreetly tap [his] foreground" (369). Clearly Sedaris was trying to appear more normal, in a sense, but was failing terribly. After high school, Sedairs faces the new wrinkle of sharing a college dorm room. He conjures up elaborate excuses to hide specific tics, ensuring his roommate that "there's a good chance the brain tumor will shrink" (369) if he shakes his head around hard enough and that specialists have ordered him to perform "eye exercises to strengthen what they call he 'corneal fibers'" (369). He eventually comes to a point of such paranoid hypervigilance that he memorizes his roommate's class schedule to find moments to carry his tics in privacy. Sedaris worries himself sick attempting to approximate 'normal': "I got exactly fourteen minutes of sleep during my entire first year of college" (369). When people are pressured to perform an identity inconsistent with their own-pressured by socially constructed standards of normativity- they harm themselves in the process. Furthermore, even though the responsibility does not necessarily fall on Sedaris' peers to offer support, we can assume that their condemnation of his behavior reinforces the standards that oppress him.

Sedaris' compulsive habits peak and begin their slow decline when he picks up the new habit of smoking cigarettes, which is of course much more socially acceptable while just as compulsive in nature once addiction has the chance to take over. He reflects, from the standpoint of an adult, on the reason for the acquired habit, speculating that "maybe it was coincidental, or perhaps ... much more socially acceptable than crying out in tiny voices" (371). He is calmed by smoking, saying that "everything's fine as long I know there's a cigarette in my immediate future" (372). (Remarkably, he also reveals that he has not truly been cured, as he revisits his former ticks and will "dare to press [his] nose against the doorknob or roll his eyes to achieve that once-satisfying ache" [372.]) Sedaris has officially achieved the tiresome goal of appearing 'normal', as his compulsive tics seemed to "[fade] out by the time [he] took up with cigarettes" (371). It is important to realize, however, that Sedaris might have found a socially acceptable way to mask his tics, but not a *healthy* one. The fact that the only activity that could take place of his compulsive tendencies was the dangerous use of a highly addictive substance, one that has proven to be dangerously harmful with frequent and prolonged use, shows that he is conforming to the standards of society which do not correspond with healthy behaviors.

In a society full of dangerous, inconvenient, or downright strange habits that are nevertheless considered socially acceptable, David Sedaris suffered through the psychic and physical violence and negligence of those who should have cared for him, With what we can clearly recognize as a socially constructed disability, Sedaris was continually denied support and mocked by authority figures. He struggled to socialize and perform academically while still carrying out each task he was innately compelled to do, and faced consistent social hardship because of his outlandish appearance and behaviors that are viewed in our society as "weird." Because of ableist, socially constructed standards of normativity, Sedaris had to face a long string of turmoil and worry taht most of society may never come to completely understand. We can only hope that as a greater society, we continue sharing and studying stories like Sedairs' so that we critique the flawed guidelines we force upon different bodies and minds, and attempt to be more accepting and welcoming of the idiosyncrasies we might deem to be unfavorable.

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Sedaris, David. "A Plague of Tics." *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*, 4th edition, edited by Samuel Cohen, Bedford, 2013, pp. 359-372.

Teacher Takeaways

"I like how this student follows their thesis through the text, highlighting specific instances from Sedaris's essay that support their analysis. Each instance of this evidence is synthesized with the student's observations and connected back to their thesis statement, allowing for the essay to capitalize on the case being built in their conclusion. At the ends of some earlier paragraphs, some of this 'spine-building' is interrupted with suggestions of how characters in the essay should behave, which doesn't always clearly link to the thesis's goals. Similarly, some information isn't given a context to help us understand its relevance, such as what violating the student-teacher trust has to do with normativity being a social construct, or how Sedaris's description of 'a blow to the nose' being a narcotic creates a parallel to his mother's drinking and smoking. Without further analysis and synthesis of this information the reader is left to guess how these ideas connect."

– Professor Dannemiller

Analyzing "Richard Cory"[82]

In the poem "Richard Cory" by Edward Arlington Robinson, a narrative is told about the character Richard Cory by those who admired him. In the last stanza, the narrator, who uses the pronoun "we," tells use that Richard Cory commits suicide. Throughout most of the poem, though, Cory had been described as a wealthy gentleman. The "people on the pavement" (2), the speakers of the poem, admired him because he presented himself well, was educated, and was wealthy. The poem presents the idea that, even though Cory seemed to have everything going for him, being wealthy does not guarantee happiness or health.

Throughout the first three stanzas Cory is described in a positive light, which makes it seem like he has everything that he could ever need. Specifically, the speaker compares Cory directly and indirectly to royalty because of his wealth and his physical appearance: "He was a gentleman from sole to crown, / Clean favored and imperially slim" (Robinson 3-4). In line 3, the speaker is punning on "soul" and "crown." At the same time, Cory is both a gentleman from foot (sole) to head (crown) and also soul to crown. The use of the word "crown" instead of head is a clever way to show that Richard was thought of as a king to the community. The phrase "imperially slim" can also be associated with royalty because imperial comes from "empire." The descriptions used gave clear insight that he was admired for his appearance and manners, like a king or emperor.

In other parts of the poem, we see that Cory is 'above' the speakers. The first lines, "When Richard Cory went down torn, / We people on the pavement looked at him" (1-2), show that Cory is not from the same place as the speakers. The words "down" and "pavement" also suggest a difference in status between Cory and the people. The phrase "We people on the pavement" used in the first stanza (Robinson 2), tells us that the narrator and those that they are including in their "we" may be homeless and sleeping on the pavement; at the least, this phrase shows that "we" are below Cory.

In addition to being 'above,' Cory is also isolated from the speakers. In the second stanza, we can see that there was little interaction between Cory and the people on the pavement: "And he was always human when he talked; / But still fluttered pulses when he said, / 'Good- morning'" (Robinson 6-8). Because people are "still fluttered" by so little, we can speculate that it was special for them to talk to Cory. But these interactions gave those on the pavement no insight into Richard's real feelings or personality. Directly after the descriptions of the impersonal interactions, the narrator mentions that "he was rich-yes, richer than a king" (Robinson 9). At the same time that Cory is again compared to royalty, this line reveals that people were focused on his wealth and outward appearance, not his personal life or wellbeing.

The use of the first-person plural narration to describe Cory gives the reader the impression that everyone in Cory's presence longed to have the life that he did. Using "we," the narrator speaks for many people at once. From the end of the third stanza to the end of the poem, the writing turns from admirable description of Richard to a noticeably more melancholy, dreary description of what those who admired Richard had to do because they did not have all that Richard did. These people had nothing, but they thought that he was everything. To make us wish that we were in his place. So on we worked, and waited for the light,

And went without the meat, and cursed the bread... (Robinson 9-12) They sacrificed their personal lives and food to try to rise up to Cory's level. They longed to not be required to struggle. A heavy focus on money and materialistic things blocked their ability to see what Richard Cory was actually feeling or going through. I suggest that "we" also includes the reader of the poem. If we read the poem this way, "Richard Cory" critiques the way we glorify wealthy people's lives to the point that we hurt ourselves. Our society values financial success over mental health and believes in a false narrative about social mobility.

Though the piece was written more than a century ago, the perceived message has not been lost. Money and materialistic things do not create happiness, only admiration and alienation from those around you. Therefore, we should not sacrifice our own happiness and leisure for a lifestyle that might not make us happy. The poem's messages speaks to our modern society, too, because it shows a stigma surrounding mental health: if people have "everything / To make us wish that we were in [their] place" (11-12), we often assume that they don't deal with the same mental health struggles as everyone. "Richard Cory" reminds us that we should take care of each other, not assume that people are okay because they put up a good front.

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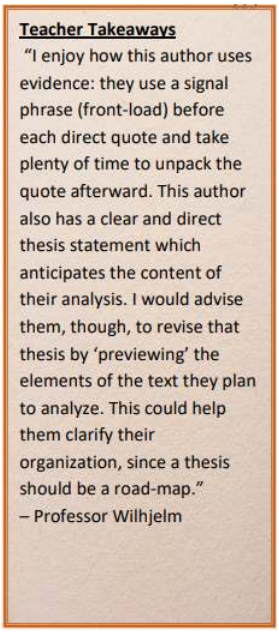

To Suffer or Surrender? An Analysis of Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" [83]

Death is a part of life that everyone must face at one point or another. The poem "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" depicts the grief and panic one feels when a loved is approaching the end of their life, while presenting a question; is it right to surrender to death, or should it be resisted? In this poem, Dylan Thomas opposses the idea of a peaceful passing, and uses various literary devices such as repetition, metaphor, and imagery to argue that death should be resisted at all costs.

The first thing that one may notice while reading Thomas's piece is that there are key phrases repeated throughout the poem. As a result of the poem's villanelle structure, both lines "Do not go gentle into that good night" and "Rage, rage against the dying of the light" (Thomas) are repeated often. This repetition gives the reader a sense of panic and desperation as the speaker pleads with their father to stay. The first line showcases a bit of alliteration of n sounds at the beginning of "not" and "night," as well as alliteration of hard g sounds in the words "go" and "good." These lines are vital to the poem as they reiterate its central meaning, making it far from subtle and extremely hard to miss. These lines add even more significance due to their placement in the poem. "Dying of the light" and "good night" are direct metaphors for death, and with the exception of the first line of the poem, they only appear at the end of a stanza. This structural choice is a result of the villanelle form, but we can interpret it to highlight the predictability of life itself, and signifies the undeniable and unavoidable fact that everyone must face death at the end of one's life. The line "my father, there on the sad height" (Thomas 16) confirms that this poem is directed to the speaker's father, the idea presented in these lines is what Thomas wants his father to recognize above all else.

This poem also has many contradictions. In the fifth stanza, Thomas describes men near death "who see with blinding sight" (Thomas 13). "Blinding sight" is an oxymoron, which implies that although with age most men lose their sight, they are wiser and enlightened, and have a greater understanding of the world. In this poem "night" is synonymous with "death"; thus, the phrase "good night" can also be considered an oxymoron if one does not consider death good. Presumably the speaker does not, given their desperation for their father to avoid it. The use of the word "good" initially seems odd, however, although it may seem like the speaker rejects the idea of death itself, this is not entirely the case. Thomas presents yet another oxymoron by saying "Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears" (Thomas 17). By referring to passionate tears as a blessing and a curse, which insinuates that the speaker does not necessarily believe death itself is inherently wrong, but to remain complicit in the face of death would be. These tears would be a curse because it is difficult to watch a loved one cry, but a blessing because the tears are a sign that the father is unwilling to surrender to death. This line is especially significant as it distinguishes the author's beliefs about death versus dying, which are vastly different. "Good night" is an acknowledgement of the bittersweet relief of the struggles and hardships of life that come with death, while "fierce tears" and the repeated line "Rage, rage against the dying of the light" show that the speaker sees the act of dying as a much more passionate, sad, and angering experience. The presence of these oxymorons creates a sense of conflict in the reader, a feeling that is often felt by those who are struggling to say goodbye to a loved one.

At the beginning of the middle four stanzas they each begin with a description of a man, "Wise men... Good men... Wild men... Grave men..." (Thomas 4; 7; 10; 13). Each of these men have one characteristic that is shared, which is that they all fought against death for as long as they could. These examples are perhaps used in an attempt to inspire the father. Although the speaker begs their father to "rage" against death, this is not to say that they believe death is avoidable. Thomas reveals this in the 2nd stanza that "wise men at their end know dark is right" (Thomas 4), meaning that wise men know that death is inevitable, which in return means that the speaker is conscious of this fact as well. It also refers to the dark as "right", which may seem contradicting to the notion presented that death should not be surrendered to; however, this is yet another example of the contrast between the author's beliefs about death itself, and the act of dying. The last perspective that Thomas shows is "Grave men". Of course, the wordplay of "grave" alludes to death. Moreover, similarly to the second stanza that referred to "wise men", this characterization of "grave men" alludes to the speaker's knowledge of impending doom, despite the constant pleads for their father to resist it.

Another common theme that occurs in the stanzas about these men is regret. A large reason the speaker is so insistent that his father does not surrender to the "dying of the light" is because the speaker does not want their father to die with regrets, and believes that any honorable man should do everything they can in their power to make a positive impact in the world. Thomas makes it clear that it is cowardly to surrender when one can still do good, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.

All these examples of men are positively associated with the "rage" that Thomas so often refers to, further supporting the idea that rage, passion, and madness are qualities of honorable men. Throughout stanza 2, 3, 4 and 5, the author paints pictures of these men dancing, singing in the sun, and blazing like meteors. Despite the dark and dismal tone of the piece, the imagery used depicts life as joyous and lively. However, a juxtaposition still exists between men who are truly living, and men who are simply avoiding death. Words like burn, rave, sad, and rage are used when referencing the prime of one's life. None of these words give the feeling of peace; however those alluding to life are far more cheerful. Although the author rarely uses the words "life" and "death", the text symbolizes them through light and night. The contrast between the authors interpretation of life versus death is drastically different. Thomas wants the reader to see that no matter how old they become, there is always something to strive for and fight for, and to accept death would be to deprive the world of what you have to offer.

In this poem Dylan Thomas juggles the complicated concept of mortality. Thomas perfectly portrays the fight against time as we age, as well as the fear and desperation that many often feel when facing the loss of a loved one. Although the fight against death cannot be won, in "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" Dylan Thomas emphasizes how despite this indisputable fact, one should still fight against death with all their might. Through the use of literary devices such as oxymorons and repetition, Thomas inspires readers to persevere, even in the most dire circumstances.

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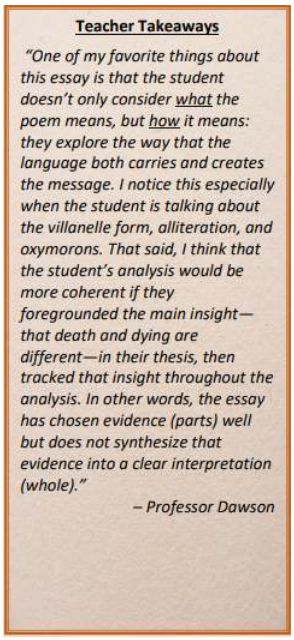

Christ Like [84]

in Raymond Carver's "Cathedral", the character Robert plays a Christ-like role. To mirror that, the narrator plays the role of Saul, a man who despised and attacked Christ and his followers until he became converted. Throughout the story there are multiple instances where Robert does things similar to miracles performed in biblical stories, and the narrator continues to doubt and judge him. Despite Robert making efforts to converse with the narrator, he refuses to look past the oddity of his blindness. The author also pays close attention to eyes and blindness. To quote the Bible, "Having eyes, see ye not?" (*King James Bible*, Mark, 8. 18). The characters who have sight don't see as much as Robert, and he is able to open their eyes and hearts.

When Robert is first brought up, it is as a story. The narrator has heard of him and how wonderful he is, but has strong doubts about the legitimacy of it all. He shares a specific instance in which Robert asked to touch his wife's face. He says, "She told me he touched his fingers to every part of her face, her nose- even her neck!", and goes on to talk about how she tried to write a poem about it (Carver 34). The experience mentioned resembled the story of Jesus healing a blind man by putting his hands on his eyes and how, afterward, the man was restored (Mark 8.21-26). While sharing the story, however, the only thing the narrator cares about is that the blind man touched his wife's neck. At this point in the story the narrator still only cares about what's right in front of him, so hearing retellings means nothing to him.

When Saul is introduced in the Bible, it is as a man who spent his time persecuting the followers of Christ and "made havoc of the church" (Acts 8.3-5). From the very beginning of the story, the narrator makes it known that, "A blind man in my house was not something that I looked forward to" (Carver 34). He can't stand the idea of something he'd only seen in movies and heard tell of becoming something real. Even when talking about his own wife, he disregards the poem she wrote for him. When he hears the name of Robert's deceased wife, his first response is to point out how strange it sounds (Carver 36). He despises Robert, so he takes out his aggression on the people who don't, and drives them away.

The narrator's wife drives to the train station to pick up Robert while he stays home and waits, blaming Robert for his boredom. When they finally do arrive, the first thing he notices about Robert is his beard. It might be a stretch to call this a biblical parallel since a lot of people have beards, but Carver makes a big deal out of this detail. The next thing the narrator points out, though, is that his wife "had this blind man by his coat sleeve" (Carver 37). This draws the parallel to another biblical story. In this story a woman who has been suffering from a disease sees Jesus and says to herself, "If I may but touch his garment I shall be whole" (Matt. 9.21). Before they had gotten in the house the narrator's wife had Robert by the arm, but even after they were at the front porch, she still wanted to hold onto his sleeve.

The narrator continues to make observations about Robert when he first sees him. One that stood out was when he was talking more about Robert's physically, saying he had "stooped shoulder, as if he carried a great weight there" (Carver 38). There are many instances in the Bible where Jesus is depicted carrying some type of heavy burden, like a lost sheep, the sins of the world, and even

his own cross. He also points out on multiple occasions that Robert has a big and booming voice, which resembles a lot of depictions of a voice "from on high."

After they sit and talk for a while, they have dinner. This dinner resembles the last supper, especially when the narrator says, "We ate like there was no tomorrow" (Carver 39). He also describes how Robert eats and says "he'd tear of a hunk of buttered bread and eat that. He'd follow this up with a big drink of milk" (Carver 39). Those aren't the only things he ate, but the order in which he ate the bread and took a drink is the same order as the sacrament, a ritual created at the last supper. The author writing it in that order, despite it being irrelevant to the story, is another parallel that seems oddly specific in an otherwise normal sequence of events. What happens after the dinner follows the progression of the Bible as well.

After they've eaten a meal like it was their last the narrator's wife falls asleep like Jesus' apostles outside the garden of Gethsemane. In the Bible, the garden of Gethsemane is where Jesus goes after creating the sacrament and takes on the sins of all the world. He tells his apostles to keep watch outside the garden, but they fall asleep and leave him to be captured by the non-believers (Matt. 26.36-40). In "Cathedral," Robert is left high and alone with the narrator when the woman who holds him in such high regard falls asleep. Instead of being taken prisoner, however, Robert turns the tables and puts all focus on the narrator. His talking to the narrator is like a metaphorical taking on of his sins. On page 46 the narrator tries to explain to him what a cathedral looks like. It turns out to be of no use, since the narrator has never talked to a blind person before, much like a person trying to pray who never has before. Robert decides he needs to place his hands on the narrator like he did to his wife on the first page.

When Saul becomes converted, it is when Jesus speaks to him as a voice "from on high." As soon as the narrator begins drawing with Robert (a man who is high), his eyes open up. When Jesus speaks to Saul, he can no longer see. During the drawing of the cathedral, Robert asks the narrator to close his eyes. Even when Robert tells him he can open his eyes, the narrator decides to keep them closed. He went from thinking Robert coming over was a stupid idea to being a full believer in him. He says, "I put in windows with arches. I drew flying buttresses. I hung great doors. I couldn't stop" (Carver 45). Even with all the harsh things the narrator said about Robert, being touched by him and made his heart open up. Carver ends the story after the cathedral has been drawn and has the narrator say, "It's really something" (Carver 46).

Robert acts as a miracle worker, not only to the narrator's wife, but to him as well. Despite the difficult personality, the narrator can't help but be converted. He says how resistant he is to have him over, and tries to avoid any conversation with him. He pokes fun at little details about him, disregards peoples' love for him, but still can't help being converted by him. Robert's booming voice carries power over the narrator, but his soft touch is what finally makes him see.

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The Space Between the Racial Binary [85]

Toni Morrison in "Recitatif" confronts race as a social construction, where race is not biological but created from human interactions. Morrison does not disclose the race of the two main characters, Twyla and Roberta, although she does provide that one character is black and the other character is white. Morrison emphasizes intersectionality by confounding stereotypes about race through narration, setting, and allusion. We have been trained to 'read' race through a variety of signifers, but "Recitatif" puts those signifers at odds.

Twyla is the narrator throughout "Recitatif" where she describes the events from her own point of view. Since the story is from Twyla's perspective, it allows the readers to characterize her and Roberta solely based on what she mentions. At the beginning of the story Twyla states that "[her] mother danced all night", which is the main reason why Twyla is "taken to St. Bonny's" (Morrison 139). Twyla soon finds that she will be "stuck... with a girl from a while other race" who "never washed [her] hair and [she] smelled funny" (Morrison 139). From Twyla's description of Roberta's hair and scent, one could assume that Roberta is black due to the stereotype revolves around a black individual's hair. Later on in the story Twyla runs into Roberta at her work and describes Roberta's hair as "so big and wild" the "[she] coul hardly see her face", which is another indicator that Roberta has Afro-textured hair (Morrison 144). Yet, when Twyla encounters Roberta at a grocery store "her huge hair was sleek" and "smooth" resembling a

white woman's hair style (Morrison 146). Roberta's hairstyles are stereotypes that conflict with one another; one attributing to a black woman, the other to a white woman. The differences in hair texture, and style, are a result of phenotypes, not race. Phenotypes are observable traits that "result from interactions between your genes and the environment" ("What are Phenotypes?"). There is not a specific gene in the human genome that can be used to determine a person's race. Therefore, the racial catergories in society are not constructed on the genetic level, but the social. Dr. J Craig Venter states, "We all evolved in the last 100,000 years from the same small number of tribes that migrated out of Africa and colonized the world", so it does not make sense to claim that race has evolved a specific gene and certain people inherit those specific genes (Angier). From Twyla's narration of Roberta, Roberta can be classified into one of two racial groups based on the stereotypes ascribed to her.

Intersectionality states that people are at a disadvantage by multiple sources of oppressions, such their race and class. "Recitatif" seems to be written during the Civil Rights Era where protests against racial integration took place. This is made evident when Twyla says, "strife came to us that fall... Strife. Racial strife" (Morrison 150). According to NPR, the Supreme Court ordered school busing in 1969 and went into effect in 1973 to allow for desegregation ("Legacy"). Twyla "thought it was a good thing until she heard it was a bad thing", while Roberta picketed outside "the school they were trying to integrate" (Morrison 150). Twyla and Roberta both become irritated with one another's reaction to the school busing order, but what woman is on which side? Roberta seems to be a white woman against integrating black students into her children's school, and Twyla suggests that she is a black mother who simply wants best for her son Joesph even if that does mean going to a school that is "far-out-of-the-way" (Morrison 150). At this point in the story Roberta lives in "Annandale" which is "a neighborhood full of doctors and IBM executives" (Morrison 147), and at the same time, Twyla is "Mrs. Benson" living in "Newburgh" where "half the population... is on welfare..." (Morrison 145). Twyla implies that Newburgh is being gentrified by these "smart IBM people", which inevitably results in an increase in rent and property values, as well as changes the area's culture. In America, minorities are usually the individuals who are displaced and taken over by wealthier, middle-class white individuals who are displaced and taken over by wealthier, middle-class white individuals. From Twyla's tone, and the setting, it seems that Twyla is a black individual that is angry towards "the rich IBM crowd" (Morrison 146). When Twyla and Roberta are bickering over school busing, Roberta claims that America "is a free country" and she is not "doing anything" to Twyla (Morrison 150). From Roberta's statements, it suggests that she is a affluent, and ignorant white person that is oblivious to the hardships that African Americans had to overcome, and still face today. Rhonda Soto contends that "Discussing race without including class analysis is like watching a bird fly without looking at the sky...". It is ingrained in America as the normative that whites are mostly part of the middle-class and upper-class, while blacks are part of the working-class. Black individuals are being classified as low-income based entirely on their skin color. It is pronounced that Twyla is being discriminated against because she is a black woman, living in a low-income neighborhood where she lacks basic resources. For example. when Twyla and Roberta become hostile with one another over school busing, the supposedly white mothers start moving towards Twyla's car to harass her. She points out that "[my] face [] looked mean to them" and that these mothers "could not wait to throw themselves in front of a police car" (Morrison 151). Twyla is indicating that these mothers are priviliged based on their skin color, while she had to wait until her car started to rock back and forth to a point where "the four policeman who had been drinking Tab in their car finally got the message and [then] strolled over" (Morrison 151). This shows that Roberta and the mothers protesting are white, while Twyla is a black woman fighting for her resources. Not only is Twyla being targeted due to her race, but as well her class by protesting mothers who have classified her based on intersectionality.

Intersectionality is also alluded in "Recitatif" based on Roberta's interests. Twyla confronts Roberta at the "Howard Johnson's" while working as a waitress with her "blue and white triangle on [her] head" and "[her] hair shapeless in a net" (Morrison 145). Roberta boasts that her friend has "an appointment with Hendrix" and shames Twyla for not knowing Jimi Hendrix (Morrison 145). Roberta begins to explain that "he's only the biggest" rockstar, guitarist, or whatever Roberta was going to say. It is clear that Roberta is infatuated with Jimi Hendrix, who was an African American rock guitarist. Because Jimi Hendrix is a black musician, the reader could also assume that Roberta is also black. At the same time, Roberta may be white since Jimi Hendrix appealed to a plethora of people. In addition, Twyla illustrates when she saw Roberta "sitting in [the] booth" she was "with two guys smothered in head and facial" (Morrison 144). These men may be two white counter culturists, and possible polygamists, in a relationship with Roberta who is also white. From Roberta's enthusiasm in Jimi Hendrix it alludes that she may be black or white, and categorized from this interest.

Intersectionality states that people are prone to "predict an individual's identity, beliefs, or values based on categories like race" (Williams). Morrison chose not to disclose the race of Twyla and Roberta to allow the reader to make conclusions about the two women based on the vague stereotypes Morrison presented throughout "Recitatif". Narration, setting, and allusion helped make

intersectionality apparent, which in turn allowed the readers understand, or see, that race is in fact a social construction. "Recitatif" forces the readers to come to terms with their own racial prejudices.

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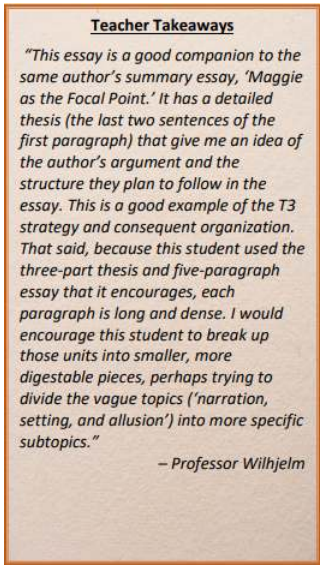

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3.6: Putting It Together- Writing Your Response

Assignment: Text Wrestling Analysis

To practice critical, analytical thinking through the medium of writing, you will perform a text wrestling analysis and synthesize your findings in an essay driven by a central, unifying insight presented as a thesis and supported by evidence.

Assignment

First, you will determine which text is that you'd like to analyze. Your teacher might provide a specific text or set of texts to choose from, or they may allow you to choose your own.

1) **If your teacher assigns a specific text**, follow the steps in the next section.

2) **If your teacher assigns a set of texts to choose from**, read each of them once. Then, narrow it down by asking yourself,

a. Which texts were most striking or curious? Which raised the most questions for you as a reader?

b. How do the texts differ from one another in content, form, voice, and genre?

c. Which seem like the "best written"? Why?

d. Which can you relate to personally?

Try to narrow down to two or three texts that you particularly appreciate. Then try to determine which of these will help you write the best close reading essay possible. Follow the steps from #1 once you've determined your focus text.

3) **If your teacher allows you to choose any text you want,** they probably did so because they want you to choose a text that means a lot of you personally.

a. Consider first what medium (e.g., prose, film, music, etc.) or genre (e.g., essay, documentary, Screamo) would be most appropriate and exciting, keeping in mind any restrictions your teacher might have set.

b. Then, brainstorm what topics seem relevant and interesting to you.

c. Finally, try to encounter at least three or four different texts so you can test the waters.

Now that you've chosen a focus text, you should read it several times using the active reading strategies contained in this section and the appendix. Consider what *parts* are contributing to the *whole* text, and develop an analytical perspective about that relationship. Try to articulate this analytical perspective as a working thesis- a statement of your interpretation which you will likely revise in some way or another. (You might also consider whether a specific critical lens seems relevant or interesting to your analysis.)

Next, you will write a 250-word proposal indicating which text you've chosen, what your working thesis is, and why you chose that text and analytical persepective. (This will help keep your teacher in the loop on your process and encourage you to think through your approach before writing.)

Finally, draft a text wrestling essay that analytically explores some part of your text using the strategies detailed in this section. Your essay will advance an interpretation that will

a) help your audience understand the text differently (beyond basic plot/ comprehension); and/or

b) help your audience understand our world differently, using the text as a tool to illuminate the human experience.

Keep in mind, you will have to re-read your text several times to analyze it well and compile evidence. Consider forming a close reading discussion group to unpack your text collaboratively before you begin writing independently.

Your essay should be thesis-driven and will include quotes, paraphrases, and summary from the original text as evidence to support your points. Be sure to revise at least once before submitting your final draft.

Although you may realize as you evaluate your rhetorical situation, this kind of essay often values Standardized Edited American English, a dialect of the English language. Among other things, this entails a polished, "academic" tone. Although you need not use a thesaurus to find all the fanciest words, your voice should be less colloquial than in a descriptive personal narrative.

Exercise

Before you begin, consider your rhetorical situation:

Subject:	Occasion:
How will this influence the way you write?	How will this influence the way you write?
Audience:	Purpose:
How will this influence the way you write?	How will this influence the way you write?

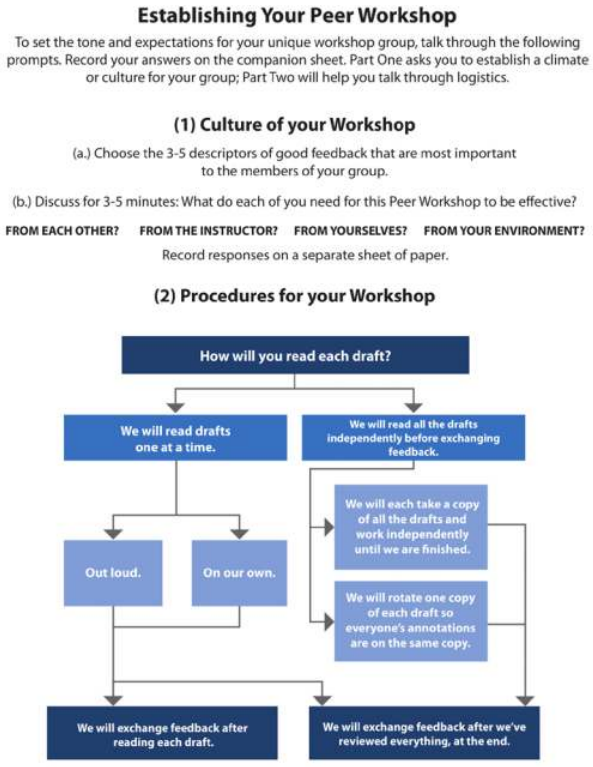
Assignment: Text-Wrestling Analysis

Each student will write an essay which **analyzes** a text and presents a unique, central, unifying insight as a **thesis**. The essay will incorporate ideas and techniques explored in Section 2, including the use of **evidence** as to support, elaborate, or nuance the student's thesis. The essay will demonstrate thoughtful pre-writing, drafting, and revision based on feedback from the instructor, classmates, and/or the Writing Center.

Criteria	Instructor Comments	Score
Ideas, Focus, and Content *Has the author organized their analysis around a central, unifying insight? Is the scope of this thesis appropriate to the rhetorical situation?*		/___
Structure *Does the analysis unfold logically and fluidly? Does each paragraph relate back to the analytical thesis clearly?*		/___
Style and Language *Does the author use an academic voice appropriate to the rhetorical situation? Does the author effectively integrate evidence by front-loading, punctuating, and explaining?*		/___
Depth, Support, and Analysis *Has the author provided a convincing amount of evidence to support their analytical insight? Does the author foreground their analytical perspective, using the text in the background to support, elaborate, or nuance their thesis?*		/___
Mechanics *Does the essay read smoothly with minimal spelling/grammar/mechanical issues? Does it use proper format?*		/___
		/___ pts. possible

Guidelines for Peer Workshop

Before beginning the Peer Workshop and revision process, I recommend consulting the Revision Concepts and Strategies Appendix. In your Peer Workshop group (or based on your teacher's directions), establish a process for workshopping that will work for you. You may find the flowchart titled "Establishing Your Peer Workshop" useful.



Establishing Peer Workshop Process:
Do you prefer written notes, or open discussion? Would you like to read all the drafts first, then discuss, or go one at a time? Should the author respond to feedback or just listen? What anxieties do you each have about sharing your writing? How will you provide feedback that is both critical and kind? How will you demonstrate respect for your peers?

One Example of a Peer Workshop Process

Before the workshop, each author should spend several minutes generating requests for support (#1 below). Identify specific elements you need help on.

✔ Here are a few examples:

I need helping honing my thesis statement.

Do you think my analysis is flawed?

I'm not very experienced with in-text citations; can you make sure they're accurate?

Do you think my evidence is convincing enough?

During the workshop, follow this sequence:

1) Student A introduces their draft, distributes copies, and make requests for feedback. *What do you want help with, specifically?*

2) Student A reads their draft aloud while students B and C annotate/ take notes. *What do you notice as the draft is read aloud?*

3) Whole group discusses the draft; student A takes notes. Use these prompts as a reference to generate and frame your feedback. Try to identify specific places in your classmates' essays where the writer is successful and where the writer needs support. Consider constructive, specific, and actionable feedback. *What is the author doing well? What could they do better?*

- What requests does the author have for support? What feedback do you have on this issue, specifically?
- Identify one "golden line" from the essay under consideration- a phrase, sentance, or paragraph that resonates with you. What about this lime is so striking.
- Consult either the rubric included above or an alternative rubric, if your instructor has provided one. Is the author on track to meet the expectations of the assignment? What does the author do well in each of the categories? What could they do better?
    - Ideas, Content, and Focus
    - Structure
    - Style and Language
    - Depth, Support, and Reflection
    - Mechanics
- What resonances do you see between this draft and others from your group? Between this draft and the exemplers you've read?

4) Repeat with students B and C

After the workshop, try implementing some of the feedback your group provided while they're still nearby! For example, if Student B said your introduction needed more integrity, draft some new language and see if Student B likes the direction you're moving in. As you are comfortable, exchange contact information with your group so you can continue the discussion outside of class.

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3.6.1: Model Texts by Student Authors

Model Texts by Student Authors

To Suffer or Surrender? An Analysis of Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" [83]

Death is a part of life that everyone must face at one point or another. The poem "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" depicts the grief and panic one feels when a loved is approaching the end of their life, while presenting a question; is it right to surrender to death, or should it be resisted? In this poem, Dylan Thomas opposses the idea of a peaceful passing, and uses various literary devices such as repetition, metaphor, and imagery to argue that death should be resisted at all costs.

The first thing that one may notice while reading Thomas's piece is that there are key phrases repeated throughout the poem. As a result of the poem's villanelle structure, both lines "Do not go gentle into that good night" and "Rage, rage against the dying of the light" (Thomas) are repeated often. This repetition gives the reader a sense of panic and desperation as the speaker pleads with their father to stay. The first line showcases a bit of alliteration of n sounds at the beginning of "not" and "night," as well as alliteration of hard g sounds in the words "go" and "good." These lines are vital to the poem as they reiterate its central meaning, making it far from subtle and extremely hard to miss. These lines add even more significance due to their placement in the poem. "Dying of the light" and "good night" are direct metaphors for death, and with the exception of the first line of the poem, they only appear at the end of a stanza. This structural choice is a result of the villanelle form, but we can interpret it to highlight the predictability of life itself, and signifies the undeniable and unavoidable fact that everyone must face death at the end of one's life. The line "my father, there on the sad height" (Thomas 16) confirms that this poem is directed to the speaker's father, the idea presented in these lines is what Thomas wants his father to recognize above all else.

This poem also has many contradictions. In the fifth stanza, Thomas describes men near death "who see with blinding sight" (Thomas 13). "Blinding sight" is an oxymoron, which implies that although with age most men lose their sight, they are wiser and enlightened, and have a greater understanding of the world. In this poem "night" is synonymous with "death"; thus, the phrase "good night" can also be considered an oxymoron if one does not consider death good. Presumably the speaker does not, given their desperation for their father to avoid it. The use of the word "good" initially seems odd, however, although it may seem like the speaker rejects the idea of death itself, this is not entirely the case. Thomas presents yet another oxymoron by saying "Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears" (Thomas 17). By referring to passionate tears as a blessing and a curse, which insinuates that the speaker does not necessarily believe death itself is inherently wrong, but to remain complicit in the face of death would be. These tears would be a curse because it is difficult to watch a loved one cry, but a blessing because the tears are a sign that the father is unwilling to surrender to death. This line is especially significant as it distinguishes the author's beliefs about death versus dying, which are vastly different. "Good night" is an acknowledgement of the bittersweet relief of the struggles and hardships of life that come with death, while "fierce tears" and the repeated line "Rage, rage against the dying of the light" show that the speaker sees the act of dying as a much more passionate, sad, and angering experience. The presence of these oxymorons creates a sense of conflict in the reader, a feeling that is often felt by those who are struggling to say goodbye to a loved one.

At the beginning of the middle four stanzas they each begin with a description of a man, "Wise men... Good men... Wild men... Grave men..." (Thomas 4; 7; 10; 13). Each of these men have one characteristic that is shared, which is that they all fought against death for as long as they could. These examples are perhaps used in an attempt to inspire the father. Although the speaker begs their father to "rage" against death, this is not to say that they believe death is avoidable. Thomas reveals this in the 2nd stanza that "wise men at their end know dark is right" (Thomas 4), meaning that wise men know that death is inevitable, which in return means that the speaker is conscious of this fact as well. It also refers to the dark as "right", which may seem contradicting to the notion presented that death should not be surrendered to; however, this is yet another example of the contrast between the author's beliefs about death itself, and the act of dying. The last perspective that Thomas shows is "Grave men". Of course, the wordplay of "grave" alludes to death. Moreover, similarly to the second stanza that referred to "wise men", this characterization of "grave men" alludes to the speaker's knowledge of impending doom, despite the constant pleads for their father to resist it.

Another common theme that occurs in the stanzas about these men is regret. A large reason the speaker is so insistent that his father does not surrender to the "dying of the light" is because the speaker does not want their father to die with regrets, and believes that any honorable man should do everything they can in their power to make a positive impact in the world. Thomas makes it clear that it is cowardly to surrender when one can still do good, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.

All these examples of men are positively associated with the "rage" that Thomas so often refers to, further supporting the idea that rage, passion, and madness are qualities of honorable men. Throughout stanza 2, 3, 4 and 5, the author paints pictures of these men dancing, singing in the sun, and blazing like meteors. Despite the dark and dismal tone of the piece, the imagery used depicts life as joyous and lively. However, a juxtaposition still exists between men who are truly living, and men who are simply avoiding death. Words like burn, rave, sad, and rage are used when referencing the prime of one's life. None of these words give the feeling of peace; however those alluding to life are far more cheerful. Although the author rarely uses the words "life" and "death", the text symbolizes them through light and night. The contrast between the authors interpretation of life versus death is drastically different. Thomas wants the reader to see that no matter how old they become, there is always something to strive for and fight for, and to accept death would be to deprive the world of what you have to offer.

In this poem Dylan Thomas juggles the complicated concept of mortality. Thomas perfectly portrays the fight against time as we age, as well as the fear and desperation that many often feel when facing the loss of a loved one. Although the fight against death cannot be won, in "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" Dylan Thomas emphasizes how despite this indisputable fact, one should still fight against death with all their might. Through the use of literary devices such as oxymorons and repetition, Thomas inspires readers to persevere, even in the most dire circumstances.

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Teacher Takeaways

"One of my favorite things about this essay is that the student doesn't only consider what the poem means, but how it means: they explore the way that the language both carries and creates the message. I notice this especially when the student is talking about the villanelle form, alliteration, and oxymorons. That said, I think that the student's analysis would be more coherent if they foregrounded the main insight—that death and dying are different—in their thesis, then tracked that insight throughout the analysis. In other words, the essay has chosen evidence (parts) well but does not synthesize that evidence into a clear interpretation (whole)."

– Professor Dawson

Christ Like [84]

in Raymond Carver's "Cathedral", the character Robert plays a Christ-like role. To mirror that, the narrator plays the role of Saul, a man who despised and attacked Christ and his followers until he became converted. Throughout the story there are multiple instances where Robert does things similar to miracles performed in biblical stories, and the narrator continues to doubt and judge him. Despite Robert making efforts to converse with the narrator, he refuses to look past the oddity of his blindness. The author also pays close attention to eyes and blindness. To quote the Bible, "Having eyes, see ye not?" (*King James Bible*, Mark, 8. 18). The characters who have sight don't see as much as Robert, and he is able to open their eyes and hearts.

When Robert is first brought up, it is as a story. The narrator has heard of him and how wonderful he is, but has strong doubts about the legitimacy of it all. He shares a specific instance in which Robert asked to touch his wife's face. He says, "She told me he touched his fingers to every part of her face, her nose- even her neck!", and goes on to talk about how she tried to write a poem about it (Carver 34). The experience mentioned resembled the story of Jesus healing a blind man by putting his hands on his eyes and how, afterward, the man was restored (Mark 8.21-26). While sharing the story, however, the only thing the narrator cares about

is that the blind man touched his wife's neck. At this point in the story the narrator still only cares about what's right in front of him, so hearing retellings means nothing to him.

When Saul is introduced in the Bible, it is as a man who spent his time persecuting the followers of Christ and "made havoc of the church" (Acts 8.3-5). From the very beginning of the story, the narrator makes it known that, "A blind man in my house was not something that I looked forward to" (Carver 34). He can't stand the idea of something he'd only seen in movies and heard tell of becoming something real. Even when talking about his own wife, he disregards the poem she wrote for him. When he hears the name of Robert's deceased wife, his first response is to point out how strange it sounds (Carver 36). He despises Robert, so he takes out his aggression on the people who don't, and drives them away.

The narrator's wife drives to the train station to pick up Robert while he stays home and waits, blaming Robert for his boredom. When they finally do arrive, the first thing he notices about Robert is his beard. It might be a stretch to call this a biblical parallel since a lot of people have beards, but Carver makes a big deal out of this detail. The next thing the narrator points out, though, is that his wife "had this blind man by his coat sleeve" (Carver 37). This draws the parallel to another biblical story. In this story a woman who has been suffering from a disease sees Jesus and says to herself, "If I may but touch his garment I shall be whole" (Matt. 9.21). Before they had gotten in the house the narrator's wife had Robert by the arm, but even after they were at the front porch, she still wanted to hold onto his sleeve.

The narrator continues to make observations about Robert when he first sees him. One that stood out was when he was talking more about Robert's physically, saying he had "stooped shoulder, as if he carried a great weight there" (Carver 38). There are many instances in the Bible where Jesus is depicted carrying some type of heavy burden, like a lost sheep, the sins of the world, and even his own cross. He also points out on multiple occasions that Robert has a big and booming voice, which resembles a lot of depictions of a voice "from on high."

After they sit and talk for a while, they have dinner. This dinner resembles the last supper, especially when the narrator says, "We ate like there was no tomorrow" (Carver 39). He also describes how Robert eats and says "he'd tear of a hunk of buttered bread and eat that. He'd follow this up with a big drink of milk" (Carver 39). Those aren't the only things he ate, but the order in which he ate the bread and took a drink is the same order as the sacrament, a ritual created at the last supper. The author writing it in that order, despite it being irrelevant to the story, is another parallel that seems oddly specific in an otherwise normal sequence of events. What happens after the dinner follows the progression of the Bible as well.

After they've eaten a meal like it was their last the narrator's wife falls asleep like Jesus' apostles outside the garden of Gethsemane. In the Bible, the garden of Gethsemane is where Jesus goes after creating the sacrament and takes on the sins of all the world. He tells his apostles to keep watch outside the garden, but they fall asleep and leave him to be captured by the non-believers (Matt. 26.36-40). In "Cathedral," Robert is left high and alone with the narrator when the woman who holds him in such high regard falls asleep. Instead of being taken prisoner, however, Robert turns the tables and puts all focus on the narrator. His talking to the narrator is like a metaphorical taking on of his sins. On page 46 the narrator tries to explain to him what a cathedral looks like. It turns out to be of no use, since the narrator has never talked to a blind person before, much like a person trying to pray who never has before. Robert decides he needs to place his hands on the narrator like he did to his wife on the first page.

When Saul becomes converted, it is when Jesus speaks to him as a voice "from on high." As soon as the narrator begins drawing with Robert (a man who is high), his eyes open up. When Jesus speaks to Saul, he can no longer see. During the drawing of the cathedral, Robert asks the narrator to close his eyes. Even when Robert tells him he can open his eyes, the narrator decides to keep them closed. He went from thinking Robert coming over was a stupid idea to being a full believer in him. He says, "I put in windows with arches. I drew flying buttresses. I hung great doors. I couldn't stop" (Carver 45). Even with all the harsh things the narrator said about Robert, being touched by him and made his heart open up. Carver ends the story after the cathedral has been drawn and has the narrator say, "It's really something" (Carver 46).

Robert acts as a miracle worker, not only to the narrator's wife, but to him as well. Despite the difficult personality, the narrator can't help but be converted. He says how resistant he is to have him over, and tries to avoid any conversation with him. He pokes fun at little details about him, disregards peoples' love for him, but still can't help being converted by him. Robert's booming voice carries power over the narrator, but his soft touch is what finally makes him see.

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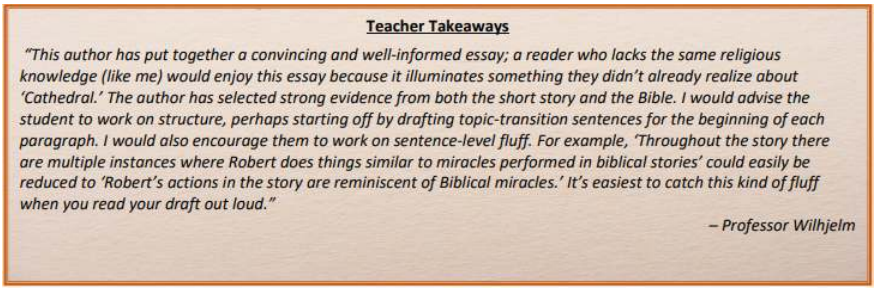

The Space Between the Racial Binary [85]

Toni Morrison in "Recitatif" confronts race as a social construction, where race is not biological but created from human interactions. Morrison does not disclose the race of the two main characters, Twyla and Roberta, although she does provide that one character is black and the other character is white. Morrison emphasizes intersectionality by confounding stereotypes about race through narration, setting, and allusion. We have been trained to 'read' race through a variety of signifers, but "Recitatif" puts those signifers at odds.

Twyla is the narrator throughout "Recitatif" where she describes the events from her own point of view. Since the story is from Twyla's perspective, it allows the readers to characterize her and Roberta solely based on what she mentions. At the beginning of the story Twyla states that "[her] mother danced all night", which is the main reason why Twyla is "taken to St. Bonny's" (Morrison 139). Twyla soon finds that she will be "stuck... with a girl from a while other race" who "never washed [her] hair and [she] smelled funny" (Morrison 139). From Twyla's description of Roberta's hair and scent, one could assume that Roberta is black due to the stereotype revolves around a black individual's hair. Later on in the story Twyla runs into Roberta at her work and describes Roberta's hair as "so big and wild" the "[she] coul hardly see her face", which is another indicator that Roberta has Afro-textured hair (Morrison 144). Yet, when Twyla encounters Roberta at a grocery store "her huge hair was sleek" and "smooth" resembling a white woman's hair style (Morrison 146). Roberta's hairstyles are stereotypes that conflict with one another; one attributing to a black woman, the other to a white woman. The differences in hair texture, and style, are a result of phenotypes, not race. Phenotypes are observable traits that "result from interactions between your genes and the environment" ("What are Phenotypes?"). There is not a specific gene in the human genome that can be used to determine a person's race. Therefore, the racial catergories in society are not constructed on the genetic level, but the social. Dr. J Craig Venter states, "We all evolved in the last 100,000 years from the same small number of tribes that migrated out of Africa and colonized the world", so it does not make sense to claim that race has evolved a specific gene and certain people inherit those specific genes (Angier). From Twyla's narration of Roberta, Roberta can be classified into one of two racial groups based on the stereotypes ascribed to her.

Intersectionality states that people are at a disadvantage by multiple sources of oppressions, such their race and class. "Recitatif" seems to be written during the Civil Rights Era where protests against racial integration took place. This is made evident when Twyla says, "strife came to us that fall... Strife. Racial strife" (Morrison 150). According to NPR, the Supreme Court ordered school busing in 1969 and went into effect in 1973 to allow for desegregation ("Legacy"). Twyla "thought it was a good thing until she heard it was a bad thing", while Roberta picketed outside "the school they were trying to integrate" (Morrison 150). Twyla and Roberta both become irritated with one another's reaction to the school busing order, but what woman is on which side? Roberta seems to be a white woman against integrating black students into her children's school, and Twyla suggests that she is a black mother who simply wants best for her son Joesph even if that does mean going to a school that is "far-out-of-the-way" (Morrison 150). At this point in the story Roberta lives in "Annandale" which is "a neighborhood full of doctors and IBM executives" (Morrison 147), and at the same time, Twyla is "Mrs. Benson" living in "Newburgh" where "half the population... is on welfare..." (Morrison 145). Twyla implies that Newburgh is being gentrified by these "smart IBM people", which inevitably results in an increase in rent and property values, as well as changes the area's culture. In America, minorities are usually the individuals who are displaced and taken over by wealthier, middle-class white individuals who are displaced and taken over by wealthier, middle-class white individuals. From Twyla's tone, and the setting, it seems that Twyla is a black individual that is angry towards "the rich

IBM crowd" (Morrison 146). When Twyla and Roberta are bickering over school busing, Roberta claims that America "is a free country" and she is not "doing anything" to Twyla (Morrison 150). From Roberta's statements, it suggests that she is a affluent, and ignorant white person that is oblivious to the hardships that African Americans had to overcome, and still face today. Rhonda Soto contends that "Discussing race without including class analysis is like watching a bird fly without looking at the sky...". It is ingrained in America as the normative that whites are mostly part of the middle-class and upper-class, while blacks are part of the working-class. Black individuals are being classified as low-income based entirely on their skin color. It is pronounced that Twyla is being discriminated against because she is a black woman, living in a low-income neighborhood where she lacks basic resources. For example. when Twyla and Roberta become hostile with one another over school busing, the supposedly white mothers start moving towards Twyla's car to harass her. She points out that "[my] face [] looked mean to them" and that these mothers "could not wait to throw themselves in front of a police car" (Morrison 151). Twyla is indicating that these mothers are priviliged based on their skin color, while she had to wait until her car started to rock back and forth to a point where "the four policeman who had been drinking Tab in their car finally got the message and [then] strolled over" (Morrison 151). This shows that Roberta and the mothers protesting are white, while Twyla is a black woman fighting for her resources. Not only is Twyla being targeted due to her race, but as well her class by protesting mothers who have classified her based on intersectionality.

Intersectionality is also alluded in "Recitatif" based on Roberta's interests. Twyla confronts Roberta at the "Howard Johnson's" while working as a waitress with her "blue and white triangle on [her] head" and "[her] hair shapeless in a net" (Morrison 145). Roberta boasts that her friend has "an appointment with Hendrix" and shames Twyla for not knowing Jimi Hendrix (Morrison 145). Roberta begins to explain that "he's only the biggest" rockstar, guitarist, or whatever Roberta was going to say. It is clear that Roberta is infatuated with Jimi Hendrix, who was an African American rock guitarist. Because Jimi Hendrix is a black musician, the reader could also assume that Roberta is also black. At the same time, Roberta may be white since Jimi Hendrix appealed to a plethora of people. In addition, Twyla illustrates when she saw Roberta "sitting in [the] booth" she was "with two guys smothered in head and facial" (Morrison 144). These men may be two white counter culturists, and possible polygamists, in a relationship with Roberta who is also white. From Roberta's enthusiasm in Jimi Hendrix it alludes that she may be black or white, and categorized from this interest.

Intersectionality states that people are prone to "predict an individual's identity, beliefs, or values based on categories like race" (Williams). Morrison chose not to disclose the race of Twyla and Roberta to allow the reader to make conclusions about the two women based on the vague stereotypes Morrison presented throughout "Recitatif". Narration, setting, and allusion helped make intersectionality apparent, which in turn allowed the readers understand, or see, that race is in fact a social construction. "Recitatif" forces the readers to come to terms with their own racial prejudices.

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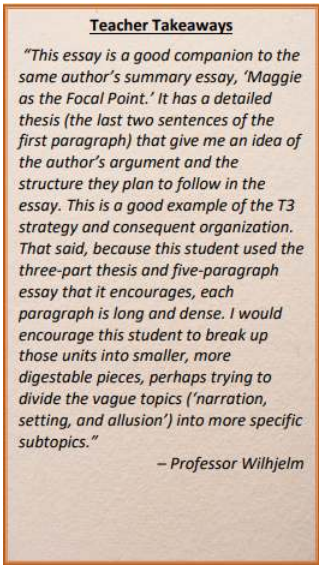

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Understanding Our Stories- Personal Narrative Writing

4.1: Introduction to Narrative Essay
4.2: The Art of Narration
4.3: Video- The Danger of a Single Story
4.4: Model Narrative Essays
4.4.1: Only Daughter by Sandra Cisneros
4.4.2: Superman and Me by Sherman Alexie
4.4.3: Fish Cheeks by Amy Tan
4.4.4: Salvation by Langston Hughes
4.4.5: The Year I Grew Wildly, While Men Looked On by Ashley Ford
4.5: Narrative Techniques- Your Writing Process
4.6: Writing for Success- Narration
4.7: Describing a Scene or Experience
4.7.1: Section Introduction- Describing a Scene or Experience
4.7.2: Techniques
4.7.3: Activites
4.7.4: Model Texts by Student Authors
4.8: Telling a story
4.8.1: Section Introduction- Telling a Story
4.8.2: Techniques
4.8.3: Activities
4.8.4: Model Texts by Student Authors
4.9: Reflecting on an Experience
4.9.1: Section Introduction- Reflecting on an Experience
4.9.2: Techniques
4.9.3: Activities
4.9.4: Model Texts by Student Authors
4.10: Narrative Beginnings and Endings
4.11: Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative
4.11.1: Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative
4.11.2: Model Texts by Student Authors
4.11.3: Endnotes
4.12: Supporting Storytelling with AI

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4.1: Introduction to Narrative Essay

Narrative Essay

Reflect for a moment on the last memorable story you heard, told, or read. What made the story remain with you? Was it a compelling character or participant in the action? An interesting set of circumstances? Was it told in an amusing or serious manner, and did it make you react emotionally?

Everyone loves a good story, and each day we seek out good stories in a variety of media: novels, short stories, newspapers, works of fine art, blogs, even notes and posts on social media pages.

Narration is the art of storytelling, and in this module, you will investigate the ways in which writers employ common narration strategies to engage readers from the beginning to the end of a significant event. You will also look critically at some examples of effective narration as you draft your narrative essay.

Module Outcomes

After successfully completing this module, you should be able to:

1. Describe the purpose, basic components, characteristics, and structure of narrative writing
2. Demonstrate writing techniques of a narrative essay

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4.2: The Art of Narration

Instructions:

Read the guide below that offers specific instructions and steps you can take to write a powerful, engaging narrative essay. As you read, make note of key points or tips that you can use when you write your own narrative essay this week.

Tell Your Story

Like any good story, a narrative essay needs to engage the audience by bringing an event to life. How do you do this as a writer? Start by choosing a single important moment and "zooming in" on the actions, thoughts, sensations, and feelings you experienced. Map out a beginning, middle, and end in your mind, and turn these into paragraphs that you flesh out with vivid details (sights, sounds, textures, observations, and dialogue engage an audience more than simply telling what happened).

It's generally better to focus in more detail on a smaller time than try to cover too much in less detail. For a 500-word essay, try to narrow your scope to an impactful moment rather than writing about an entire semester or year. You can always give background information as needed to fill in gaps. Finally, be sure you have a strong sense of purpose; you should have learned or realized something valuable as a result of your story- something that is worth passing on to other readers.

The Thesis

Students applying for college are probably familiar with the idea of a thesis -- a clear and compelling assertion or argument introduced somewhere in the beginning of the essay and supported throughout. In narrative writing, the thesis takes on a slightly different role. As many narrative essays focus on personal experience, the thesis then becomes the lesson of that experience. It answers the question of why the experience is important in the first place. According to the Santa Barbara City College Writing Center, this kind of thesis can offer the moral of the story or reveal a universal theme.

Show, Don't Tell

One golden rule of narrative writing is to show rather than tell. This means that the writer should not simply tell the reader what occurred in the story but rather show the reader the events of the story in vivid detail. For example, the narrator of a story about a car accident might say, “I was in a car wreck." Although a complete statement, the telling lacks the visceral emotion of an actual car wreck. A better passage would be, “I awoke in a heap of twisted metal and shattered glass, bleeding from my left shoulder.”

The Plot

After writing a captivating introduction, the writer should develop the plot, or the sequential events of the story. In other types of essay writing, the writer would use the main body of the essay to lay out subtopics, quotes and research that supports the thesis. In narrative essays, the main body should be the experience itself. The writer should unfold events chronologically, using transitions from paragraph to paragraph that don’t halt the reader. The Online Writing Lab of Purdue University urges writers "to evoke specific emotions and senses in the reader."

Climax and Conclusion

As in any good story, the events in a narrative essay should culminate in a dramatic moment of significant change, otherwise known as the climax. In a personal essay about a car wreck, the accident itself may be the climax, or the climax may occur later when the victim passes out or nearly dies on the operating table. The climax should reveal the point where the character changes, for better or worse. It should lead back to the thesis that was touched upon in the introduction, which in turn should be reiterated, even nuanced, in the conclusion. Requirements for narrative essays vary from college to college. The University of Texas at Austin recommends an essay no longer than one page, single-spaced, for basic admission requirements.

See more samples:

The essays here are additional resources you can use to guide your writing. These are written by students, not professionals, so keep that in mind as you read. A good technique is to highlight or underline sensory details, dialogue, and key ideas as you read.

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4.3: Video- The Danger of a Single Story

Our lives, our cultures, are composed of many overlapping stories. Novelist Chimamanda Adichie tells the story of how she found her authentic cultural voice — and warns that if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding.

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4.4: Model Narrative Essays

In the following section, we present a collection of five model narrative essays. These carefully curated pieces serve as outstanding examples of effective narration, showcasing the techniques and strategies employed by skilled writers to engage readers and convey their stories with impact.

Reading Model Essays

As you read through these essays, we encourage you to approach them with an open mind. Your goal is to identify and understand the techniques that make these narratives so compelling. Consider the following aspects as you read:

1. Opening hooks: How does the writer capture your attention from the very first sentence?
2. Vivid descriptions: Note how the author uses sensory details and imagery to bring scenes and characters to life.
3. Dialogue: Observe how conversations between characters can reveal their personalities, relationships, and conflicts.
4. Pacing: Analyze how the writer controls the speed of the narrative, creating tension, suspense, or moments of reflection.
5. Theme and purpose: Reflect on the underlying message or lesson that the author aims to convey through their story.

Most people would agree that maintaining focused attention while reading can be challenging at times. However, we encourage you to persist and engage with these essays actively. Take notes, highlight passages that resonate with you, and jot down any questions or observations that come to mind. By immersing yourself in these narratives and practicing close reading, you will gain valuable insights into the craft of storytelling and strengthen your ability to concentrate and analyze written works.

Developing your skills as a reader and writer is an ongoing process. These model essays serve as a foundation, providing you with examples to learn from and emulate in your own writing. Embrace the opportunity to explore these narratives, and don't hesitate to revisit them multiple times to deepen your understanding.

Happy reading and happy writing!

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4.4.1: Only Daughter by Sandra Cisneros

Only Daughter by Sandra Cisneros

From Latina: *Women's Voices From the Borderlands.* Edited by Lillian Castillo-Speed. New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Once, several years ago, when I was just starting out my writing career, I was asked to write my own contributor's note for an anthology I was part of. I wrote: "I am the only daughter in a family of six sons. That explains everything."

Well, I've thought about that ever since, and yes, it explains a lot to me, but for the reader's sake I should have written: "I am the only daughter in a Mexican family of six sons." Or even: "I am the only daughter of a Mexican father and a Mexican-American mother." Or: "I am the only daughter of a working-class family of nine." All of these had everything to do with who I am today.

I was/am the only daughter and only a daughter. Being an only daughter in a family of six sons forced me by circumstance to spend a lot of time by myself because my brothers felt it beneath them to play with a girl in public. But that aloneness, that loneliness, was good for a would-be writer—it allowed me time to think and think, to imagine, to read and prepare myself.

Being only a daughter for my father meant my destiny would lead me to become someone's wife. That's what he believed. But when I was in the fifth grade and shared my plans for college with him, I was sure he understood. I remember my father saying, "Que bueno, mi'ha, that's good." That meant a lot to me, especially since my brothers thought the idea hilarious. What I didn't realize was that my father thought college was good for girls—good for finding a husband. After four years in college and two more in graduate school, and still no husband, my father shakes his head even now and says I wasted all that education.

In retrospect, I'm lucky my father believed daughters were meant for husbands. It meant it didn't matter if I majored in something silly like English. After all, I'd find a nice professional eventually, right? This allowed me the liberty to putter about embroidering my little poems and stories without my father interrupting with so much as a "What's that you're writing?"

But the truth is, I wanted him to interrupt. I wanted my father to understand what it was I was scribbling, to introduce me as "My only daughter, the writer." Not as "This is only my daughter. She teaches." Es maestra—teacher. Not even profesora.

In a sense, everything I have ever written has been for him, to win his approval even though I know my father can't read English words, even though my father's only reading includes the brown-ink *Esto* sports magazines from Mexico City and the bloody *¡Alarma!* magazines that feature yet another sighting of La Virgen de Guadalupe on a tortilla or a wife's revenge on her philandering husband by bashing his skull in with a molcajete (a kitchen mortar made of volcanic rock). Or the fotonovelas, the little picture paperbacks with tragedy and trauma erupting from the characters' mouths in bubbles.

My father represents, then, the public majority. A public who is disinterested in reading, and yet one whom I am writing about and for, and privately trying to woo.

When we were growing up in Chicago, we moved a lot because of my father. He suffered bouts of nostalgia. Then we'd have to let go of our flat, store the furniture with mother's relatives, load the station wagon with baggage and bologna sandwiches and head south. To Mexico City.

We came back, of course. To yet another Chicago flat, another Chicago neighborhood, another Catholic school. Each time, my father would seek out the parish priest in order to get a tuition break, and complain or boast: "I have seven sons."

He meant *siete hijos*, seven children, but he translated it as "sons." "I have seven sons." To anyone who would listen. The Sears Roebuck employee who sold us the washing machine. The short-order cook where my father ate his ham-and-eggs breakfasts. "I have seven sons." As if he deserved a medal from the state.

My papa. He didn't mean anything by that mistranslation, I'm sure. But somehow I could feel myself being erased. I'd tug my father's sleeve and whisper: "Not seven sons. Six! and one daughter."

When my oldest brother graduated from medical school, he fulfilled my father's dream that we study hard and use this—our heads, instead of this—our hands. Even now my father's hands are thick and yellow, stubbed by a history of hammer and nails and twine and coils and springs. "Use this," my father said, tapping his head, "and not this," showing us those hands. He always looked tired when he said it.

Wasn’t college an investment? And hadn’t I spent all those years in college? And if I didn’t marry, what was it all for? Why would anyone go to college and then choose to be poor? Especially someone who had always been poor.

Last year, after ten years of writing professionally, the financial rewards started to trickle in. My second National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. A guest professorship at the University of California, Berkeley. My book, which sold to a major New York publishing house.

At Christmas, I flew home to Chicago. The house was throbbing, same as always: hot tamales and sweet tamales hissing in my mother’s pressure cooker, and everybody—my mother, six brothers, wives, babies, aunts, cousins—talking too loud and at the same time. Like in a Fellini film, because that’s just how we are.

I went upstairs to my father’s room. One of my stories had just been translated into Spanish and published in an anthology of Chicano writing and I wanted to show it to him. Ever since he recovered from a stroke two years ago, my father likes to spend his leisure hours horizontally. And that’s how I found him, watching a Pedro Infante movie on Galavisión and eating rice pudding.

There was a glass filled with milk on the bedside table. There were several vials of pills and balled Kleenex. And on the floor, one black sock and a plastic urinal that I didn’t want to look at but looked at anyway. Pedro Infante was about to burst into song, and my father was laughing.

I’m not sure if it was because my story was translated into Spanish, or because it was published in Mexico, or perhaps because the story dealt with Tepeyac, the colonia my father was raised in and the house he grew up in, but at any rate, my father punched the mute button on his remote control and read my story.

I sat on the bed next to my father and waited. He read it very slowly. As if he were reading each line over and over. He laughed at all the right places and read lines he liked out loud. He pointed and asked questions: “Is this So-and-so?” “Yes,” I said. He kept reading.

When he was finally finished, after what seemed like hours, my father looked up and asked: “Where can we get more copies of this for the relatives?”

Of all the wonderful things that happened to me last year, that was the most wonderful.

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4.4.2: Superman and Me by Sherman Alexie

Superman and Me by Sherman Alexie

I learned to read with a Superman comic book. Simple enough, I suppose. I cannot recall which particular Superman comic book I read, nor can I remember which villain he fought in that issue. I cannot remember the plot, nor the means by which I obtained the comic book. What I can remember is this: I was 3 years old, a Spokane Indian boy living with his family on the Spokane Indian Reservation in eastern Washington state. We were poor by most standards, but one of my parents usually managed to find some minimum-wage job or another, which made us middle-class by reservation standards. I had a brother and three sisters. We lived on a combination of irregular paychecks, hope, fear and government surplus food.

My father, who is one of the few Indians who went to Catholic school on purpose, was an avid reader of westerns, spy thrillers, murder mysteries, gangster epics, basketball player biographies and anything else he could find. He bought his books by the pound at Dutch's Pawn Shop, Goodwill, Salvation Army and Value Village. When he had extra money, he bought new novels at supermarkets, convenience stores and hospital gift shops. Our house was filled with books. They were stacked in crazy piles in the bathroom, bedrooms and living room. In a fit of unemployment-inspired creative energy, my father built a set of bookshelves and soon filled them with a random assortment of books about the Kennedy assassination, Watergate, the Vietnam War and the entire 23-book series of the Apache westerns. My father loved books, and since I loved my father with an aching devotion, I decided to love books as well.

I can remember picking up my father's books before I could read. The words themselves were mostly foreign, but I still remember the exact moment when I first understood, with a sudden clarity, the purpose of a paragraph. I didn't have the vocabulary to say "paragraph," but I realized that a paragraph was a fence that held words. The words inside a paragraph worked together for a common purpose. They had some specific reason for being inside the same fence. This knowledge delighted me. I began to think of everything in terms of paragraphs. Our reservation was a small paragraph within the United States. My family's house was a paragraph, distinct from the other paragraphs of the LeBrets to the north, the Fords to our south and the Tribal School to the west. Inside our house, each family member existed as a separate paragraph but still had genetics and common experiences to link us. Now, using this logic, I can see my changed family as an essay of seven paragraphs: mother, father, older brother, the deceased sister, my younger twin sisters and our adopted little brother.

At the same time I was seeing the world in paragraphs, I also picked up that Superman comic book. Each panel, complete with picture, dialogue and narrative was a three-dimensional paragraph. In one panel, Superman breaks through a door. His suit is red, blue and yellow. The brown door shatters into many pieces. I look at the narrative above the picture. I cannot read the words, but I assume it tells me that "Superman is breaking down the door." Aloud, I pretend to read the words and say, "Superman is breaking down the door." Words, dialogue, also float out of Superman's mouth. Because he is breaking down the door, I assume he says, "I am breaking down the door." Once again, I pretend to read the words and say aloud, "I am breaking down the door" In this way, I learned to read.

This might be an interesting story all by itself. A little Indian boy teaches himself to read at an early age and advances quickly. He reads "Grapes of Wrath" in kindergarten when other children are struggling through "Dick and Jane." If he'd been anything but an Indian boy living on the reservation, he might have been called a prodigy. But he is an Indian boy living on the reservation and is simply an oddity. He grows into a man who often speaks of his childhood in the third-person, as if it will somehow dull the pain and make him sound more modest about his talents.

A smart Indian is a dangerous person, widely feared and ridiculed by Indians and non-Indians alike. I fought with my classmates on a daily basis. They wanted me to stay quiet when the non-Indian teacher asked for answers, for volunteers, for help. We were Indian children who were expected to be stupid. Most lived up to those expectations inside the classroom but subverted them on the outside. They struggled with basic reading in school but could remember how to sing a few dozen powwow songs. They were monosyllabic in front of their non-Indian teachers but could tell complicated stories and jokes at the dinner table. They submissively ducked their heads when confronted by a non-Indian adult but would slug it out with the Indian bully who was 10 years older. As Indian children, we were expected to fail in the non-Indian world. Those who failed were ceremonially accepted by other Indians and appropriately pitied by non-Indians.

I refused to fail. I was smart. I was arrogant. I was lucky. I read books late into the night, until I could barely keep my eyes open. I read books at recess, then during lunch, and in the few minutes left after I had finished my classroom assignments. I read books in the car when my family traveled to powwows or basketball games. In shopping malls, I ran to the bookstores and read bits and pieces of as many books as I could. I read the books my father brought home from the pawnshops and secondhand. I read the books I borrowed from the library. I read the backs of cereal boxes. I read the newspaper. I read the bulletins posted on the walls of the school, the clinic, the tribal offices, the post office. I read junk mail. I read auto-repair manuals. I read magazines. I read anything that had words and paragraphs. I read with equal parts joy and desperation. I loved those books, but I also knew that love had only one purpose. I was trying to save my life.

Despite all the books I read, I am still surprised I became a writer. I was going to be a pediatrician. These days, I write novels, short stories, and poems. I visit schools and teach creative writing to Indian kids. In all my years in the reservation school system, I was never taught how to write poetry, short stories or novels. I was certainly never taught that Indians wrote poetry, short stories and novels. Writing was something beyond Indians. I cannot recall a single time that a guest teacher visited the reservation.

There must have been visiting teachers. Who were they? Where are they now? Do they exist? I visit the schools as often as possible. The Indian kids crowd the classroom.

Many are writing their own poems, short stories and novels. They have read my books.

They have read many other books. They look at me with bright eyes and arrogant wonder. They are trying to save their lives. Then there are the sullen and already defeated Indian kids who sit in the back rows and ignore me with theatrical precision.

The pages of their notebooks are empty. They carry neither pencil nor pen. They stare out the window. They refuse and resist. "Books," I say to them. "Books," I say. I throw my weight against their locked doors. The door holds. I am smart. I am arrogant. I am lucky. I am trying to save our lives.

Questions:

1. Twice Alexie asserts that he is (or was) “smart,” “arrogant,” and “lucky.” Why does he place so much emphasis on these qualities?
2. “Despite all the books I read,” Alexie observes in his final paragraph, “I am still surprised I became a writer.” Why is he surprised?
3. Alexie writes that from the moment he realized the reason for paragraphs, he “began to think of everything in terms of paragraphs.” How does the structure and arrangement of Alexie’s own paragraphs contribute to the development of the essay’s themes?
4. Alexie’s essay is a literacy narrative, an account of how he learned to read and write. Write your own literacy narrative.

Learn More

Watch this short video to learn more about the author, Sherman Alexie

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4.4.3: Fish Cheeks by Amy Tan

Fish Cheeks by Amy Tan

I fell in love with the minister's son the winter I turned fourteen. He was not Chinese, but as white as Mary in the manger. For Christmas I prayed for this blond-haired boy, Robert, and a slim new American nose.

When I found out that my parents had invited the minister's family over for Christmas Eve dinner, I cried. What would Robert think of our shabby Chinese Christmas? What would he think of our noisy Chinese relatives who lacked proper American manners? What terrible disappointment would he feel upon seeing not a roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese food?

On Christmas Eve I saw that my mother had outdone herself in creating a strange menu. She was pulling black veins out of the backs of fleshy prawns. The kitchen was littered with appalling mounds of raw food: a slimy rock cod with bulging eyes that pleaded not to be thrown into a pan of hot oil, tofu, which looked like stacked wedges of rubbery white sponges, a bowl soaking dried fungus back to life, and a plate of squid, their backs crisscrossed with knife markings so they resembled bicycle tires.

And then they arrived—the minister's family and all my relatives in a clamor of doorbells and rumpled Christmas packages. Robert grunted hello, and I pretended he was not worthy of existence.

Dinner threw me deeper into despair. My relatives licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table, dipping them into the dozen or so plates of food. Robert and his family waited patiently for platters to be passed to them. My relatives murmured with pleasure when my mother brought out the whole steamed fish. Robert grimaced. Then my father poked his chopsticks just below the fish eye and plucked out the soft meat. "Amy, your favorite," he said, offering me the tender fish cheek. I wanted to disappear.

At the end of the meal my father leaned back and belched loudly, thanking my mother for her fine cooking. "It's a polite Chinese custom to show you are satisfied," explained my father to our astonished guests. Robert was looking down at his plate with a reddened face. The minister managed to muster up a quiet burp. I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night.

After everyone had gone, my mother said to me, "You want to be the same as American girls on the outside." She handed me an early gift. It was a miniskirt in beige tweed. "But inside you must always be Chinese. You must be proud you are different. Your only shame is to have shame."

And even though I didn't agree with her then, I knew that she understood how much I had suffered during the evening's dinner. It wasn't until many years later—long after I had gotten over my crush on Robert—that I was able to fully appreciate her lesson and the true purpose behind our particular menu. For Christmas Eve that year, she had chosen all my favorite foods.

Questions on Meaning

1. Why does Tan cry when she finds out that the boy she is in love with is coming to dinner?
2. Why does Tan's mother go out of her way to prepare a disturbingly traditional Chinese dinner for her daughter and guests? What one sentence best sums up the lesson Tan was not able to understand until years later?
3. How does the fourteen-year-old Tan feel about her Chinese background? About her mother?
4. What is Tan's purpose in writing this essay? Does she just want to entertain readers, or might she have a weightier goal?

Questions on Writing Strategy

1. How does Tan draw the reader into her story right from the beginning?
2. How does Tan use transitions both to drive and to clarify her narrative?
3. What is the irony of the last sentence of the essay?
4. Paragraph 3 is a passage of pure description. Why does Tan linger over the food? What is the effect of this paragraph?

Questions on Language

1. The simile about Mary in the second sentence of the essay is surprising. Why? Why is it amusing?
2. How does the narrator's age affect the tone of this essay? Give examples of language particularly appropriate to a fourteen-year-

old.

Suggestions for Writing

1. Journal: Think of an occasion when, for whatever reason, you were ashamed of being different. How did you react? Did you try to hide your difference in order to fit in, or did you reveal or celebrate your uniqueness?

From journal to essay: Using Tan's essay as a model, write a brief narrative based on the sketch from your journal. Try to imitate the way Tan integrates the external events of the dinner with her own feelings about what is going on. Your story may be humorous, like Tan's, or more serious.

2. Take a perspective like that of the minister's son, Robert: Write a narrative essay about a time when you had to adjust to participating in a culture different from your own. It could be a meal, a wedding or other rite of passage, a religious ceremony, a trip to another country. What did you learn from your experiences, about yourself and others?

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4.4.4: Salvation by Langston Hughes

Salvation by Langston Hughes

I was saved from sin when I was going on thirteen. But not really saved. It happened like this. There was a big revival at my Auntie Reed's church. Every night for weeks there had been much preaching, singing, praying, and shouting, and some very hardened sinners had been brought to Christ, and the membership of the church had grown by leaps and bounds. Then just before the revival ended, they held a special meeting for children, "to bring the young lambs to the fold." My aunt spoke of it for days ahead. That night I was escorted to the front row and placed on the mourners' bench with all the other young sinners, who had not yet been brought to Jesus.

My aunt told me that when you were saved you saw a light, and something happened to you inside! And Jesus came into your life! And God was with you from then on! She said you could see and hear and feel Jesus in your soul. I believed her. I had heard a great many old people say the same thing and it seemed to me they ought to know. So I sat there calmly in the hot, crowded church, waiting for Jesus to come to me.

The preacher preached a wonderful rhythmical sermon, all moans and shouts and lonely cries and dire pictures of hell, and then he sang a song about the ninety and nine safe in the fold, but one little lamb was left out in the cold. Then he said: "Won't you come? Won't you come to Jesus? Young lambs, won't you come?" And he held out his arms to all us young sinners there on the mourners' bench. And the little girls cried. And some of them jumped up and went to Jesus right away. But most of us just sat there.

A great many old people came and knelt around us and prayed, old women with jet-black faces and braided hair, old men with work-gnarled hands. And the church sang a song about the lower lights are burning, some poor sinners to be saved. And the whole building rocked with prayer and song.

Still I kept waiting to see Jesus.

Finally all the young people had gone to the altar and were saved, but one boy and me. He was a rounder's son named Westley. Westley and I were surrounded by sisters and deacons praying. It was very hot in the church, and getting late now. Finally Westley said to me in a whisper: "God damn! I'm tired o' sitting here. Let's get up and be saved." So he got up and was saved.

Then I was left all alone on the mourners' bench. My aunt came and knelt at my knees and cried, while prayers and song swirled all around me in the little church. The whole congregation prayed for me alone, in a mighty wail of moans and voices. And I kept waiting serenely for Jesus, waiting, waiting—but he didn't come. I wanted to see him, but nothing happened to me. Nothing! I wanted something to happen to me, but nothing happened.

I heard the songs and the minister saying: "Why don't you come? My dear child, why don't you come to Jesus? Jesus is waiting for you. He wants you. Why don't you come? Sister Reed, what is this child's name?"

"Langston," my aunt sobbed.

"Langston, why don't you come? Why don't you come and be saved? Oh, Lamb of God! Why don't you come?"

Now it was really getting late. I began to be ashamed of myself, holding everything up so long. I began to wonder what God thought about Westley, who certainly hadn't seen Jesus either, but who was now sitting proudly on the platform, swinging his knickerbockered legs and grinning down at me, surrounded by deacons and old women on their knees praying. God had not struck Westley dead for taking his name in vain or for lying in the temple. So I decided that maybe to save further trouble, I'd better lie, too, and say that Jesus had come, and get up and be saved.

So I got up.

Suddenly the whole room broke into a sea of shouting, as they saw me rise. Waves of rejoicing swept the place. Women leaped in the air. My aunt threw her arms around me. The minister took me by the hand and led me to the platform.

When things quieted down, in a hushed silence, punctuated by a few ecstatic "Amens," all the new young lambs were blessed in the name of God. Then joyous singing filled the room.

That night, for the first time in my life but one—for I was a big boy twelve years old—I cried. I cried, in bed alone, and couldn't stop. I buried my head under the quilts, but my aunt heard me. She woke up and told my uncle I was crying because the Holy Ghost

had come into my life, and because I had seen Jesus. But I was really crying because I couldn't bear to tell her that I had lied, that I had deceived everybody in the church, that I hadn't seen Jesus, and that now I didn't believe there was a Jesus anymore, since he didn't come to help me.

Questions for Thought:

1. **Personal Experience and Expectations:**
   - How does Hughes' experience at the church revival differ from what he expected? How does this difference shape his story?
2. **Themes of Faith and Doubt:**
   - What does Hughes' experience at the revival show about faith and doubt? How does not seeing Jesus affect his beliefs?
3. **Pressure and Conformity:**
   - How does the pressure to fit in with the religious expectations of the revival affect Hughes? How do the expectations from his family and community influence his choices?
4. **Symbolism of Light and Darkness:**
   - What do light and darkness symbolize in the essay? How does Hughes use these symbols to show his inner struggle and disappointment?
5. **Honesty and Integrity:**
   - How does Hughes' decision to lie about seeing Jesus impact his feelings about himself and his community? What does this moment of dishonesty mean for his future beliefs?

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4.4.5: The Year I Grew Wildly, While Men Looked On by Ashley Ford

The Year I Grew Wildly, While Men Looked On

At 13, who I was inside, who I wanted to be, didn't match the intentions of my body. Outside, there was no little girl to be loved innocently.

Ashley C. Ford

The men in my life noticed my body was changing before I did. Suddenly, at 13, the parts of me I had largely ignored made people uncomfortable. And in some cases, downright angry. I was walking home from school when a man pulled his car over and asked me for my phone number. I told him how old I was and he spat on the ground next to my feet.

"Go home and tell your mama she needs to be dressing you like you're 13. You almost didn't get treated like somebody's child." He sped off.

I stood there, shaking, gaping at my jeans and T-shirt. What about my clothes said I wasn't 13? What about me kept telling the rest of the world I wasn't a child? My mother told me, more than once when I was growing up, if a man ever put his hands on me, she'd kill him. I walked home, already knowing I wouldn't tell her what just happened. I believed her.

The same day, my mother laid my Christmas wish list on the kitchen counter between us. This is how we discussed most things, her on one side of the counter, and me on the other. She set her cigarette in an ashtray made of tin foil.

"Are you serious with this?" she said, reaching for another cigarette.

My eyesight was poor enough that my own handwriting was basically illegible. I put the list closer to my face and reread it. She took a drag without taking her eyes off of me. I sat the list back on the counter, folded my arms over my chest, and nodded. Everything was there. She pointed to a few items on the list.

"You want a teddy bear, a coloring book, and a Kenny Loggins album? Who is Kenny Loggins?"

"He's just a singer. I like some of his songs."

My mother narrowed her eyes, waiting for me to elaborate. She knew who Kenny Loggins was. What she didn't know was why her 13-year-old daughter was asking for the greatest hits CD of a '70s/'80s yacht-rock legend. My mother had a habit of clinging to the belief that because she'd given birth to me, I was incapable of keeping secrets from her. This usually worked in my favor. If I was quiet, she'd come up with her own theories about strange behaviors or how I discovered things she hadn't personally introduced me to, and she would be satisfied. So, I remained silent, tugging on the bottom of my shirt so it covered the bare half-inch below my navel.

Every child who grows up without a father reacts differently to the fact. There is no one behavior that can be exclusively attributed to what some call "fatherlessness." My father had been in prison since I was 6 months old, but due to the letters and cards he wrote me, I never felt lacking in love from him.

Still, I felt the absence of his physical presence in my life. He was not there to embarrass me with bad jokes in front of my friends or look at me with disappointment. There was no way to tell him about the small victories or catastrophes in my budding young adult life. In some ways, I was grateful. My father didn't have to see what was happening to my body, that it was growing wildly, and how powerless I was to stop it. I could still be his little girl.

My desire for a physical representation of my father's love led to me pursuing other "fathers." They weren't all aware of their father status, and they weren't all men, but they were all important to me. Together, they made up the perfect father: proud of me, hard on me, and charmed by me. They were my Danny Tanners, Carl Winslows, and Cliff Huxtables. But not only was I not their child, every day I got closer to not being a child at all.

I'd been afraid of the dark for as long as I could remember, but only recently had my mother become adamant about my brother and I not sleeping in her room. It was my fear of the dark that prompted Mr. Mason, my computer teacher, to give me a tape of songs by Kenny Loggins. The album was called Return to Pooh Corner and it was all lullabies. This was his solution to me falling asleep in his class, and it cemented my view of him as a perfect parental unit. After class, he handed it to me.

"Ashley, just play it while you sleep at first," he said. "Then try playing it with just your closet light on. Then try playing it with no lights on. It helped my daughter when she was little. It might help you too."

I took it home and played it every night just like he said. I lay there and I listened to Kenny sing about ponies, the "Rainbow Connection," and Winnie the Pooh. Things I understood to be pure in their representation of childhood. Mr. Mason could have sent me to in school detention for sleeping in class. He wouldn't have been the first, and I would have slept there anyway. But he helped me. He didn't just help me, he gave me a tape that meant something to him, a tape that had belonged to his own real daughter. I replayed the moment in my head, lilting melodies in the background, unassuming and understanding.

A week later, my mother stopped me as I climbed into the car.

"You need to change your shirt." It was my favorite shirt — denim with puffy sleeves and a mostly Lycra bodice. It was tighter than it had been three months ago, but still pretty, and still my favorite. I dragged my feet on the return to the house. The rest of the family was already in the car, my grandmother in the passenger seat shaking her head. She turned to my mother, "When did she get so…big?"

My mother sunk into the driver's seat, watching me walk away. "I don't know. But it's only a matter of time until I have to choke somebody for looking at her."

I let the screen door slam, walking quickly toward my room. I grabbed a long white T-shirt in the from my top drawer, something I usually slept in. I changed out of my jeans and into baggy overalls. Nothing to see here. Nothing to touch. I took my Kenny Loggins tape out of my tape player and put it in my front pocket, right in the center of my chest. Still with me.

By the end of the week, another teacher with father status, Mr. Unway, asked me to stay after class.

"Ashley, do you think your behavior toward me has been at all inappropriate?"

Inappropriate. I hated that word. It always meant that the breasts I hadn't asked for were moving too freely, my most comfortable shorts were too small around my ever-growing thighs, or my body was betraying me in some other way. I'd never been asked if my behavior was inappropriate in the way he just asked. I answered truthfully.

"No."

"Do you think that hanging out in my classroom before or after class in small clothes is something a nice girl would do?"

Instinctively, I wrapped my arms around myself. My clothes weren't small. They were a little tight. That was only because my body kept growing, but only in certain places. I did my best to cover myself, to hide it, to keep looking like someone's little girl, but I was visibly losing the battle, and had been for some time. It wasn't just me. We were all changing. I enjoyed watching the other girls in the locker room undress, and I kept track of their growth. But I didn't want to make them feel like I felt. I didn't want to make them feel ogled. Did they hate this too?

Mr. Unway seemed to realize how uncomfortable I'd gotten and asked if I'd come speak to the principal about this with him. I followed him out of the classroom, and into the hallway. He walked five steps ahead of me, and as we rounded the corner toward the principal's office, I spun around and walked in the opposite direction. By the time he called out for me, I was already running toward home and my tape player.

When Mr. Mason asked why I didn't come around anymore, I made something up about babysitting my siblings. He had been kind to me. He helped me. But I was not his daughter. It seemed any kindness that existed between us was bound to be tainted by how I looked and how that made any interaction between us seem rife with the potential for wrongdoing. It was evident that who I was inside, who I wanted to be, didn't match the intentions of my body. Outside, there was no little girl to be loved innocently. My body was a barrier.

I took solace in the tape that helped me get over my fear of the dark. Kenny sang to me the way I wanted my fathers to speak to me — with wisdom and love and the belief that I could still be innocent. I gave up on them, but I couldn't give up on the man whose voice could find me without looking for me. This wouldn't always be true because it couldn't always be true. My body was doing what it was supposed to do, and I would catch up. I wished no one would have to watch this happen.

That was the beauty of Kenny's music. I could grow up and never have to grow away from this safe space. The voice on my tape, a celluloid dream or memory track, didn't know me in real life. He would never have to watch me grow up. He would never have to

consider me appropriate. He only had to sing and remind me I was still here, in this body. Every part of me was still here.

Questions for Thought:

- How does the author convey the conflict between her inner self and her changing physical appearance? What specific examples or incidents from the essay illustrate this tension?
- Analyze the role of the author's father figures, both real and symbolic, in the essay. How do these male figures influence her perception of herself and her growing body?
- The Kenny Loggins tape becomes a significant symbol in the essay. What does it represent for the author, and how does it help her cope with the challenges she faces during puberty?
- Throughout the essay, the author describes the discomfort and unwanted attention she experiences due to her developing body. How does society's perception of the female body impact the author's self-image and sense of safety?
- The essay concludes with the author finding solace in Kenny Loggins' music, stating that "Every part of me was still here." How does this ending reflect the author's journey of self-acceptance and resilience in the face of physical and emotional changes?

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4.5: Narrative Techniques- Your Writing Process

What Is a Narrative Essay?

A narrative essay is a form of academic writing that aims to tell a story. As the author, your goal is to create the right atmosphere and a lifelike experience for your readers.

As a general rule, this type of paper is written from the first-person perspective. You have to put readers at the epicenter of the plot and keep them engaged. To do this, and to ensure the right atmosphere, narrative writing uses plenty of vivid details, descriptive techniques, etc.

The biggest challenge in writing a narrative essay is that it is always limited in length. Thus, your task is to take a complex story and narrow it down to incorporate its key points to fit into a short essay, while at the same time providing enough detail to keep readers engaged.

Purpose of a Narrative Essay

This form of writing is all about sharing stories—that's the key purpose. As a writer, your task is to tell readers about a real-life experience and, at the same time, to make a clear point of why you are telling that particular story and why it matters.

What makes it different from other types of essays? In a narrative essay, all you do is guide readers through the story; you don't make arguments, criticize, or attempt to persuade them. You are just telling a story, letting readers draw their own conclusions. That's the most distinctive feature of such papers.

Narrative Essay Characteristics

Here are the basic characteristics that define this type of writing:

- Non-fiction – written about events that actually happened;
- Usually written from the author's viewpoint (1st person point of view);
- Includes elements of a story, but is written in accordance with a basic structure;
- Provides information in chronological order;
- Uses lots of details to describe an event, person, or scene;
- Strives to inform readers of something, not argue or teach.

What Is the Difference Between Narrative Essays and Short Stories?

Narrative essays usually contain vivid descriptions, plot, characters, and dialogue—just like a short story. This overlap in structural elements makes sense, but there are some key differences. Here is how to distinguish a narrative essay from a short story:

- A narrative essay aims to put forward a point or argument, and the author will weave the entire piece of writing around that theme with no extraneous elements. Short stories are often more open to interpretation.
- Similarly, a narrative essay wraps up conclusively and aims to leave the reader with no hanging questions. Short stories tend to have a more abstract moral or message.

- Narrative essays are usually written in the first person.
- Narrative essays tend to follow a typical paper structure: they have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Short stories can take any format.

What Is the Format Of a Narrative Essay?

Regardless of length, narrative essays follow the same basic structure:

1. 1. **Introduction**: This starts with a “hook” to engage the reader and goes on to sketch out the theme of the essay—without giving too much away.
   2. **Body paragraphs**: This is where the author builds her argument by describing scenes and events in detail, developing characters and crafting constructive dialogue.
   3. **Conclusion**: This short reflection at the end of the essay sums up the preceding paragraphs and drives home the point.

Popular Narrative Essay Topics

Narrative essays are based on personal experiences, and as such, the topics vary widely. The key thing to remember is that all narrative essays need to make a point or argument.

Here are some things to think about when coming up with ideas for a narrative essay:

- A time you overcame adversity, fear or failure.
- The first time you experienced some life event and how it changed you.
- The story of a relationship you had with someone and what you learned.
- A time you deviated from social expectations and what that meant to you.
- A life-changing childhood incident.
- A story from your family life or travels that shaped you.

Tips For Writing a Narrative Essay

While you already have everything you need to write a personal story, the writing process for a narrative essay can be intimidating. It can help to break the process into three key stages: picking a topic, writing, and revising.

Select a meaningful topic.

To hone in on a topic, you’ll want to spend some time thinking about the medium as well as your own life. Here are some tips to help:

- **Spend time reading narrative essay examples**. They’ll not only familiarize you with the format, but they might also contain ideas that you want to respond to or develop in your own direction.
- **Think about how you can tell a coming-of-age story**. Regardless of your actual age, you are looking for those life experiences that contain this kind of personal growth or revelation.
- **Go narrow rather than broad**. A narrative essay about what you did last summer will quickly become unmanageable. Focus on one particular surfing accident or family feud that happened and you’ll have a more taut piece of work.
- **Give weight to the details**. If you’re tossing up between multiple topics, consider which gives you more scope to expand on details in an interesting way. Are there bold sights, unusual settings or huge characters? Can you write dialogue that approximates what actually happened? Those factors might sway your decision.
- **Have a purpose.** What does the story you're telling illustrate about life, the world, and who you are in it? For a successful narrative, there needs to be a meaningful takeaway for your reader/ audience.

Write your story.

Next, it’s time to write. This is the stage where you’ll plot out the story and explore your characters and message. Some writing tips for this stage:

1. **Outline the plot and stick to the chronology**. You might want to play with your timeline a little, perhaps pulling out a dramatic moment and using it as the hook for your introduction, or inserting a flashback where it’s poignant. But for the most part, your essay will be easier to read the more it flows chronologically, so don’t feel pressure to subvert that structure.

2. **Find your antagonist**. It doesn't have to be an actual person—it might be a behavior, place, condition, social norm, or anything else that is stopping you from progressing. The tension between this antagonist and the protagonist—usually you—is the source of tension that keeps the reader interested.
3. **Tell yourself this is just the draft**. The quest for perfection is your enemy. Just get words onto the page; you can judge them in the revision phase.
4. **Play with language**. When you have a license to write creatively, the temptation is to use a lot of adjectives and adverbs. However, you will paint a more vivid picture for readers if rather than "telling" them they are in a bustling market, you "show" them its sights, noises, smells and activities.
5. **Include moments of scene and analysis**. The former is a slow-paced unfolding of events; the latter is a way to speed up and summarize intervals between scenes while reflecting on the theme. A good story will have both elements.
6. **Pick one point of view**. First person point of view and past tense are almost always the most natural for a narrative essay. But whatever you choose, don't switch perspectives midway: it's rarely effective.

Review and revise your draft.

The final stage of the writing process is revision.

- **Make sure your point comes across**. This is the time to reflect on how well the narrative you've written captures your argument. You might cut extraneous material or make ideas more explicit at some points in the text. Look for moments of scene and analysis—there should be a nice balance.
- **Pay particular attention to your introduction**. These are the paragraphs that will determine whether your audience keeps reading or caring—give it extra attention. Look for an intriguing hook and ensure you've foreshadowed the major theme.
- **Proofread and check your formatting**. Sections of dialogue, in particular, might involve punctuation conventions that you are not used to. Make sure you've used quotation marks around any spoken text, attributed it to a character, and inserted line breaks every time the identity of the speaker changes.

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4.6: Writing for Success- Narration

This section will help you determine the purpose and structure of narration in writing.

The Purpose of Narrative Writing

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

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

Know Your Purpose

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

Ultimately, whether the story is fact or fiction, narrative writing tries to relay a series of events in an emotionally engaging way. You want your audience to be moved by your story, which could mean through laughter, sympathy, fear, anger, and so on. The more clearly you tell your story, the more emotionally engaged your audience is likely to be.

The Structure of a Narrative Essay

Major narrative events are most often conveyed in chronological order, the order in which events unfold from first to last. Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and these events are typically organized by time. Certain **transitional words and phrases** aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed here:

Chronological Transitional Words

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

Other basic components of a narrative are:

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

Writing a Narrative Essay

When writing a narrative essay, start by asking yourself if you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then freewrite, brainstorm, or mindmap about topics that are of general interest to you. For more information about pre-writing, review the materials in "My Writing Process – Prewriting and Draft."

Once you have a general idea of what you will be writing about, you should sketch out the major events of the story that will compose your plot. Typically, these events will be revealed chronologically and climax at a central conflict that must be resolved by the end of the story. The use of strong details is crucial as you describe the events and characters in your narrative. You want the reader to emotionally engage with the world that you create in writing.

Keep the Senses in Mind

To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative.

As always, it is important to start with a strong introduction to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an event that is interesting to introduce the story and get it going. Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the central conflict of the story and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme of the piece.

Narratives Tell A Story

Every day, you relate stories to other people through simple exchanges. You may have had a horrible experience at a restaurant the night before, or you may have had some good news you are ready to share. In each one of these experiences there's a story, and when you begin to share a personal experience, you often communicate in a narrative mode.

Although narratives can vary widely, most share several common features. Generally, storytellers establish:

- *Characters*, the person/people (sometimes they are animals) the story is about, which may include the storyteller
- *Conflict*, or struggle in the story, that builds their audience's interest
- *Details*, or descriptions, that appeal to the *senses* of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste
- *A sequence* of *events* in a *plot*, or order of what happens in the story, that keeps the audience engaged as the story unfolds
- Reflection of events around a *theme*, or unifying idea, for telling the story

Narratives of Love and War

Consider two narratives that couldn't be more different—a tale of love and a story of war: John Hodgman's sweet, geeky tale of falling in love and Emmanuel Jal's story of being a child soldier and learning to forgive his enemies. Review these videos below then engage in a discussion following the directions as listed.

John Hodgman: *A Brief Digression on Matters of Lost Time*

Emmanuel Jal: *The Music of a War Child*

Narrative Essay Example

Read the following example of a narrative essay. Note how it reflects the basic components and common features of narratives, as discussed above.

My College Education

By Scott McLean, in *Writing for Success*

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

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

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

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

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

What I learned through this process extended well beyond how to write a college paper. I learned to be open to new challenges. I never expected to enjoy a philosophy class and always expected to be a math and science person. This class and assignment, however, gave me the selfconfidence, critical-thinking skills, and courage to try a new career path. I left engineering and went on to

study law and eventually became a lawyer. More important, that class and paper helped me understand education differently. Instead of seeing college as a direct stepping stone to a career, I learned to see college as a place to first learn and then seek a career or enhance an existing career. By giving me the space to express my own interpretation and to argue for my own values, my philosophy class taught me the importance of education for education's sake. That realization continues to pay dividends every day.

Key Takeaways

- Narration is the art of storytelling.
- Narratives can be either factual or fictional. In either case, narratives should emotionally engage the reader.
- Most narratives are composed of major events sequenced in chronological order.
- Time transition words and phrases are used to orient the reader in the sequence of a narrative.
- The four basic components to all narratives are plot, character, conflict, and theme.
- The use of sensory details is crucial to emotionally engaging the reader.
- A strong introduction is important to hook the reader. A strong conclusion should add resolution to the conflict and evoke the narrative's theme.

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4.7: Describing a Scene or Experience

The following pages detail how to describe a scene or experience. Since description is an essential part of effective storytelling, pay attention to the techniques you can use to create vivid imagery in your own narratives.

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4.7.1: Section Introduction- Describing a Scene or Experience

Section Introduction- Describing a Scene or Experience

This morning, as I was brewing my coffee before rushing to work, I found myself hurrying up the stairs back to the bedroom, a sense of urgency in my step. I opened the door and froze—what was I doing? Did I need something from up here? I stood in confusion, trying to retrace the mental processes that had led me here, but it was all muddy.

It's quite likely that you've experienced a similarly befuddling situation. This phenomenon can loosely be referred to as automatization: because we are so constantly surrounded by stimuli, our brains often go on autopilot. (We often miss even the most explicit stimuli if we are distracted, as demonstrated by the Invisible Gorilla study.)

Automatization is an incredibly useful skill—we don't have the time or capacity to take in everything at once, let alone think our own thoughts simultaneously—but it's also troublesome. In the same way that we might run through a morning ritual absentmindedly, like I did above, we have also been programmed to overlook tiny but striking details: the slight gradation in color of cement on the bus stop curb; the hum of the air conditioner or fluorescent lights; the weight and texture of a pen in the crook of the hand. These details, though, make experiences, people, and places unique. By focusing on the particular, we can interrupt automatization[1]. We can become radical noticers by practicing good description.

In a great variety of rhetorical situations, **description** is an essential rhetorical mode. Our minds latch onto detail and specificity, so effective description can help us experience a story, understand an analysis, and nuance a critical argument. Each of these situations requires a different kind of description; this chapter focuses on the vivid, image-driven descriptive language that you would use for storytelling.

Chapter Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Definition
constraint-based writing	a writing technique by which an author tries to follow a rule or set of rules in order to create more experimental or surprising content, popularized by the Oulipo school of writers.
description	a rhetorical mode that emphasizes eye-catching, specific, and vivid portrayal of a subject. Often integrates imagery and thick description to this end.
defamiliarization	a method of reading, writing, and thinking that emphasizes the interruption of automatization. Established as "остранение" ("estrangement") by Viktor Shklovsky, defamiliarization attempts to turn the everyday into the strange, eye-catching, or dramatic.
ethnography	a study of a particular culture, subculture, or group of people. Uses thick description to explore a place and its associated culture.
figurative language	language which implies a meaning that is not to be taken literally. Common examples include metaphor, simile, personification, onomatopoeia, and hyperbole.
imagery	sensory language; literal or figurative language that appeals to an audience's imagined sense of sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste.
thick description	economical and deliberate language which attempts to capture complex subjects (like cultures, people, or environments) in written or spoken language. Coined by anthropologists Clifford Geertz and Gilbert Ryle.

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4.7.2: Techniques

Techniques

Imagery and Experiential Language

Strong description helps a reader experience what you've experienced, whether it was an event, an interaction, or simply a place. Even though you could never capture it perfectly, you should try to approximate sensations, feelings, and details as closely as you can. Your most vivid description will be that which gives your reader a way to imagine being themselves as of your story.

Imagery is a device that you have likely encountered in your studies before: it refers to language used to 'paint a scene' for the reader, directing their attention to striking details.

✔ Here are a few examples

- Bamboo walls, dwarf banana trees, silk lanterns, and a hand-size jade Buddha on a wooden table decorate the restaurant. For a moment, I imagined I was on vacation. The bright orange lantern over my table was the blazing hot sun and the cool air currents coming from the ceiling fan caused the leaves of the banana trees to brush against one another in soothing crackling sounds.[14]
- The sunny midday sky calls to us all like a guilty pleasure while the warning winds of winter tug our scarves warmer around our necks; the City of Roses is painted the color of red dusk, and the setting sun casts her longing rays over the Eastern shoulders of Mt. Hood, drawing the curtains on another crimson-grey day.[15]
- Flipping the switch, the lights flicker—not menacingly, but rather in a homey, imperfect manner. Hundreds of seats are sprawled out in front of a black, worn down stage. Each seat has its own unique creak, creating a symphony of groans whenever an audience takes their seats. The walls are adorned with a brown mustard yellow, and the black paint on the stage is fading and chipped.[16]

"Busy Market" by Henry Sudarman is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

You might notice, too, that the above examples appeal to many different senses. Beyond just *visual* detail, good imagery can be considered sensory language: words that help me see, but also words that help me taste, touch, smell, and hear the story. Go back and identify a word, phrase, or sentence that suggests one of these nonvisual sensations; what about this line is so striking?

Imagery might also apply **figurative language** to describe more creatively. Devices like metaphor, simile, and personification, or hyperbole can enhance description by pushing beyond literal meanings.

Using imagery, you can better communicate specific sensations to put the reader in your shoes. To the best of your ability, avoid clichés (stock phrases that are easy to ignore) and focus on the particular (what makes a place, person, event, or object unique). To practice creating imagery, try the Imagery Inventory exercise and the Image Builder graphic organizer in the Activities section of this chapter.

Thick Description

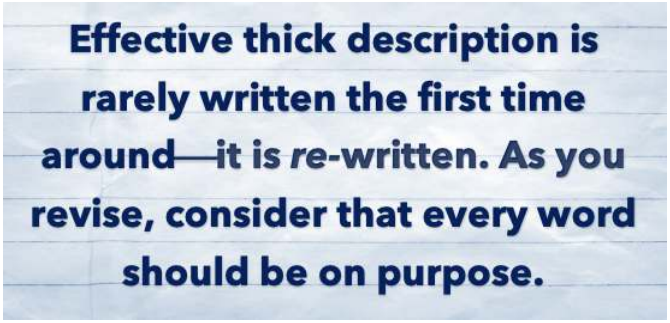
If you're focusing on specific, detailed imagery and experiential language, you might begin to feel wordy: simply piling up descriptive phrases and sentences isn't always the best option. Instead, your goal as a descriptive writer is to make the language

work hard. **Thick description** refers to economy of language in vivid description. While good description has a variety of characteristics, one of its defining features is that every word is *on purpose*, and this credo is exemplified by thick description.

Thick description as a concept finds its roots in anthropology, where ethnographers seek to portray deeper context of a studied culture than simply surface appearance.[17] In the world of writing, thick description means careful and detailed portrayal of context, emotions, and actions. It relies on specificity to engage the reader. Consider the difference between these two descriptions:

The market is busy. There is a lot of different produce. It is colorful.	vs.	Customers blur between stalls of bright green bok choy, gnarled carrots, and fiery Thai peppers. Stopping only to inspect the occasional citrus, everyone is busy, focused, industrious.

Notice that, even though the description on the right is longer, its major difference is the specificity of its word choice. The author names particular produce, which brings to mind a sharper image of the selection, and uses specific adjectives. Further, though, the words themselves do heavy lifting—the nouns and verbs are descriptive too! "Customers blur" both implies a market (where we would expect to find "customers") and also illustrates how busy the market is ("blur" implies speed), rather than just naming it as such.



Consider the following examples of thick description

- I had some strength left to wrench my shoulders and neck upward but the rest of my body would not follow. My back was twisted like a contortionist's.[18]
- Shaking off the idiotic urge to knock, I turned the brass knob in my trembling hands and heaved open the thick door. The hallway was so dark that I had to squint while clumsily reaching out to feel my surroundings so I wouldn't crash into anything.[19]
- Snow-covered mountains, enormous glaciers, frozen caves and massive caps of ice clash with heat, smoke, lava and ash. Fields dense with lush greenery and vibrant purple lupine plants butt up against black, barren lands scorched by eruptions. The spectacular drama of cascading waterfalls, rolling hills, deep canyons and towering jagged peaks competes with open expanses of flat, desert-like terrain.[20]

Where do you see the student authors using deliberate, specific, and imagistic words and phrases? Where do you see the language working hard?

Unanticipated and Eye-catching Language

In addition to our language being deliberate, we should also strive for language that is unanticipated. You should control your language, but also allow for surprises—for you and your reader! Doing so will help you maintain attention and interest from your reader because your writing will be unique and eye-catching, but it also has benefits for you: it will also make your writing experience more enjoyable and educational.

How can you be surprised by your own writing, though? If you're the author, how could you not know what you're about to say? To that very valid question, I have two responses:

1. **On a conceptual level:** Depending on your background, you may currently consider drafting to be thinking-then-writing. Instead, you should try thinking-through-writing: rather than two separate and sequential acts, embrace the possibility that the act of writing can be a new way to process through ideas. You must give yourself license to write before an idea is fully formed —but remember, you will revise, so it's okay to not be perfect. (I highly recommend Anne Lamott's "Shitty First Drafts.")
2. **On a technical level:** Try out different activities—or even invent your own—that challenge your instincts. Rules and games can help you push beyond your auto-pilot descriptions to much more eye-catching language!

Constraint-based writing is one technique like this. It refers to a process which requires you to deliberately work within a specific set of writing rules, and it can often spark unexpected combinations of words and ideas. The most valuable benefit to constraint-based writing, though, is that it gives you many options for your descriptions: because first idea ≠ best idea, constraint-based writing can help you push beyond instinctive descriptors.

When you spend more time thinking creatively, the ordinary can become extraordinary. The act of writing invites discovery! When you challenge yourself to see something in new ways, you actually see more of it. Try the Dwayne Johnson activity to think more about surprising language.

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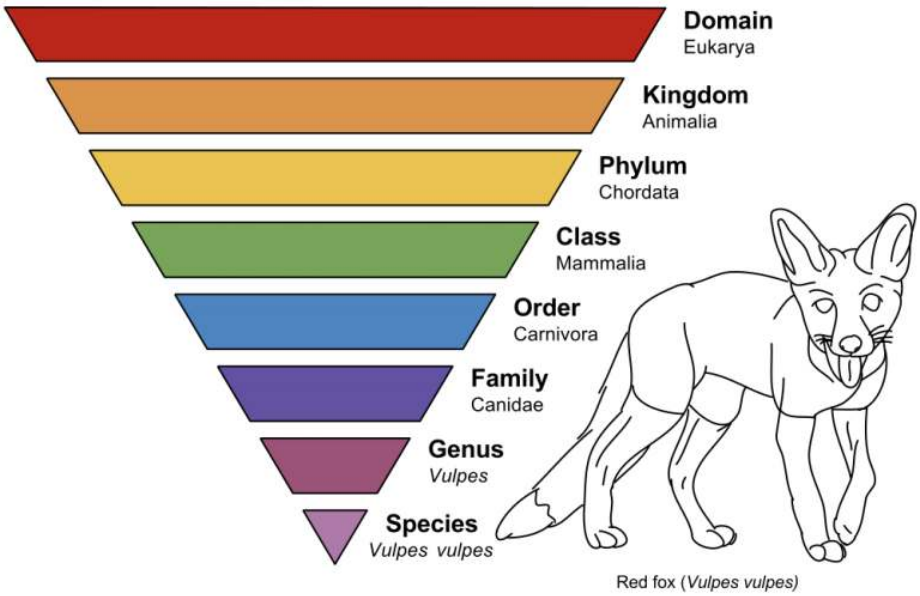
4.7.3: Activites

Activities

Specificity Taxonomy

Good description lives and dies in particularities. It takes deliberate effort to refine our general ideas and memories into more focused, specific language that the reader can identify with.

A **taxonomy** is a system of classification that arranges a variety of items into an order that makes sense to someone. You might remember from your biology class the ranking taxonomy based on Carl Linnaeus' classifications, pictured here.



"Taxonomic Rank Graph" by Annina Breen is licensed under CC BY SA 4.0

To practice shifting from general to specific, fill in the blanks in the taxonomy[21] below. After you have filled in the blanks, use the bottom three rows to make your own. As you work, notice how attention to detail, even on the scale of an individual word, builds a more tangible image.

Exercise 1

	More General	General	Specific	More Specific
(example):	animal	mammal	dog	Great Dane
1	organism		conifer	Douglas fir
		airplane		Boeing 757
2		novel		Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire
	clothing		blue jeans	
3	medical condition		respiratory infection	the common cold
	school	college		
4	artist		pop singer	
	structure	building		The White House
5		coffee	Starbucks coffee	
		scientist		Sir Isaac Newton
6				

Compare your answers with a classmate. What similarities do you share with other students? What differences? Why do you think this is the case? How can you apply this thinking to your own writing?

Micro-Ethnography

An **ethnography** is a form of writing that uses thick description to explore a place and its associated culture. By attempting this method on a small scale, you can practice specific, focused description.

Find a place in which you can observe the people and setting without actively involving yourself. (Interesting spaces and cultures students have used before include a poetry slam, a local bar, a dog park, and a nursing home.) You can choose a place you've been before or a place you've never been: the point here is to look at a space and a group of people more critically for the sake of detail, whether or not you already know that context.

As an ethnographer, your goal is to take in details without influencing those details. In order to stay focused, go to this place alone and refrain from using your phone or doing anything besides note-taking. Keep your attention on the people and the place.

- Spend a few minutes taking notes on your general impressions of the place at this time.
  - Use imagery and thick description to describe the place itself. What sorts of interactions do you observe? What sort of tone, affect, and language is used? How would you describe the overall atmosphere?
- Spend a few minutes "zooming in" to identify artifacts—specific physical objects being used by the people you see.
  - Use imagery and thick description to describe the specific artifacts. How do these parts contribute to/differentiate from/relate to the whole of the scene?

After observing, write one to two paragraphs synthesizing your observations to describe the space and culture. What do the details represent or reveal about the place and people?

Imagery Inventory

Visit a location you visit often—your classroom, your favorite café, the commuter train, etc. Isolate each of your senses and describe the sensations as thoroughly as possible. Take detailed notes in the organizer below, or use a voice-recording app on your phone to talk through each of your sensations.

Exercise 2

Sense	Sensation
Sight	
Sound	
Smell	
Touch	
Taste	

Now, write a paragraph that synthesizes three or more of your sensory details. Which details were easiest to identify? Which make for the most striking descriptive language? Which will bring the most vivid sensations to your reader's mind?

The Dwayne Johnson Activity

This exercise will encourage you to flex your creative descriptor muscles by generating unanticipated language.

Begin by finding a mundane object. (A plain, unspectacular rock is my go-to choice.) Divide a blank piece of paper into four quadrants. Set a timer for two minutes; in this time, write as many **describing words** as possible in the first quadrant. You may use a bulleted list. Full sentences are not required.

"Stones" by Carol Von Canon is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0

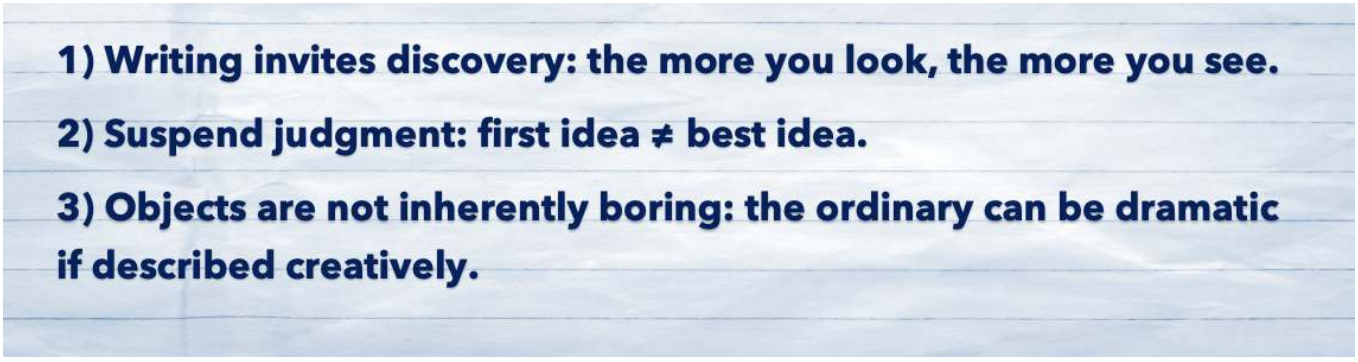
Now, cross out your first quadrant. In the second quadrant, take five minutes to write as many **new** describing words as possible without repeating anything from your first quadrant. If you're struggling, try to use imagery and/or figurative language.

For the third quadrant, set the timer for two minutes. Write as many **uses** as possible for your object.

Before starting the fourth quadrant, cross out the uses you came up with for the previous step. Over the next five minutes, come up with as many **new** uses as you can.

After this generative process, identify your three favorite items from the sections you didn't cross out. Spend ten minutes writing in any genre or form you like—a story, a poem, a song, a letter, anything—on any topic you like. Your writing doesn't have to be about the object you chose, but try to incorporate your chosen descriptors or uses in some way.

Share your writing with a friend or peer, and debrief about the exercise. What surprises did this process yield? What does it teach us about innovative language use?[22]



Surprising Yourself: Constraint-Based Scene Description

This exercise[23] asks you to write a scene, following specific instructions, about a place of your choice. There is no such thing as a step-by-step guide to descriptive writing; instead, the detailed instructions that follow are challenges that will force you to think differently while you're writing. The constraints of the directions may help you to discover new aspects of this topic since you are following the sentence-level prompts even as you develop your content.

1) Bring your place to mind. Focus on "seeing" or "feeling" your place.

2) For a title, choose an emotion or a color that represents this place to you.

3) For a first line starter, choose one of the following and complete the sentence:

> You stand there..., Every time..., We had been..., When I'm here, I know that..., I [see/smell/hear/feel/taste]..., I think sometimes...

4) After your first sentence, create your scene, writing the sentences according to the following directions:

> Sentence 2: Write a sentence with a color in it.
>
> Sentence 3: Write a sentence with a part of the body in it.
>
> Sentence 4: Write a sentence with a simile (a comparison using like or as)
>
> Sentence 5: Write a sentence of over twenty-five words.
>
> Sentence 6: Write a sentence of under eight words.
>
> Sentence 7: Write a sentence with a piece of clothing in it.
>
> Sentence 8: Write a sentence with a wish in it.
>
> Sentence 9: Write a sentence with an animal in it.
>
> Sentence 10: Write a sentence in which three or more words alliterate; that is, they begin with the same initial consonant: "She has been left, lately, with less and less time to think…."
>
> Sentence 11: Write a sentence with two commas.
>
> Sentence 12: Write a sentence with a smell and a color in it.
>
> Sentence 13: Write a sentence without using the letter "e."
>
> Sentence 14: Write a sentence with a simile.
>
> Sentence 15: Write a sentence that could carry an exclamation point (but don't use the exclamation point).
>
> Sentence 16: Write a sentence to end this portrait that uses the word or words you chose for a title.

5) Read over your scene and mark words/phrases that surprised you, especially those rich with possibilities (themes, ironies, etc.) that you could develop.

6) On the right side of the page, for each word/passage you marked, interpret the symbols, name the themes that your description and detail suggest, note any significant meaning you see in your description.

7) On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the scene you have created as a more thorough and cohesive piece in whatever genre you desire. You may add sentences and transitional words/phrases to help the piece flow.

Image Builder

This exercise encourages you to experiment with thick description by focusing on one element of your writing in expansive detail. Read the directions below, then use the graphic organizer on the following two pages or write your responses as an outline on a separate piece of paper.

1. Identify one image, object, action, or scene that you want to expand in your story. Name this element in the big, yellow bubble.

2. Develop at least three describing words for your element, considering each sense independently, as well as emotional associations. Focus on particularities. (Adjectives will come most easily, but remember that you can use any part of speech.)

3. Then, on the next page, create at least two descriptions using figurative language (metaphor, simile, personification, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, etc.) for your element, considering each sense independently, as well as emotional associations. Focus on particularities.

4. Finally, reflect on the different ideas you came up with.

    a. Which descriptions surprised you? Which descriptions are accurate but unanticipated?

    b. Where might you weave these descriptions in to your current project?

    c. How will you balance description with other rhetorical modes, like narration, argumentation, or analysis?

5. Repeat this exercise as desired or as instructed, choosing a different focus element to begin with.

6. Choose your favorite descriptors and incorporate them into your writing.

If you're struggling to get started, check out the example on the pages following the blank organizer.

Example Extra close brace or missing open brace

https://human.libretexts.org/@go/page/271693

Solution

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4.7.4: Model Texts by Student Authors

Model Texts by Student Authors

Innocence Again[24]

Imagine the sensation of the one split second that you are floating through the air as you were thrown up in the air as a child, that feeling of freedom and carefree spirit as happiness abounds. Looking at the world through innocent eyes, all thoughts and feelings of amazement. Being free, happy, innocent, amazed, wowed. Imagine the first time seeing the colors when your eyes and brain start to recognize them but never being able to name the shade or hue. Looking at the sky as it changes from the blackness with twinkling stars to the lightest shade of blue that is almost white, then the deep red of the sunset and bright orange of the sun. All shades of the spectrum of the rainbow, colors as beautiful as the mind can see or imagine.

I have always loved the sea since I was young; the smell of saltiness in the air invigorates me and reminds me of the times spent with my family enjoying Sundays at the beach. In Singapore, the sea was always murky and green but I continued to enjoy all activities in it. When I went to Malaysia to work, I discovered that the sea was clear and blue and without hesitation, I signed up for a basic diving course and I was hooked. In my first year of diving, I explored all the dive destinations along the east coast of Malaysia and also took an advanced diving course which allowed me to dive up to a depth of thirty meters. Traveling to a dive site took no more than four hours by car and weekends were spent just enjoying the sea again.

Gearing up is no fun. Depending on the temperature of the water, I might put on a shortie, wetsuit or drysuit. Then on come the booties, fins and mask which can be considered the easiest part unless the suit is tight—then it is a hop and pull struggle, which reminds me of how life can be at times. Carrying the steel tank, regulator, buoyancy control device (BCD) and weights is a torture. The heaviest weights that I ever had to use were 110 pounds, equivalent to my body weight; but as I jump in and start sinking into the sea, the contrast to weightlessness hits me. The moment that I start floating in the water, a sense of immense freedom and joy overtakes me

Growing up, we have to learn the basics: time spent in classes to learn, constantly practicing to improve our skills while safety is ingrained by our parents. In dive classes, I was taught to never panic or do stupid stuff: the same with the lessons that I have learned in life. Panic and over-inflated egos can lead to death, and I have heard it happens all the time. I had the opportunity to go to Antarctica for a diving expedition, but what led to me getting that slot was the death of a very experienced diver who used a drysuit in a tropic climate against all advice. He just overheated and died. Lessons learned in the sea can be very profound, but they contrast the life I live: risk-taker versus risk-avoider. However, when I have perfected it and it is time to be unleashed, it is time to enjoy. I jump in as I would jump into any opportunity, but this time it is into the deep blue sea of wonders.

A sea of wonders waits to be explored. Every journey is different: it can be fast or slow, like how life takes me. The sea decides how it wants to carry me; drifting fast with the currents so that at times, I hang on to the reef and corals like my life depends on it, even though I am taught never to touch anything underwater. The fear I feel when I am speeding along with the current is that I will be swept away into the big ocean, never to be found. Sometimes, I feel like I am not moving at all, kicking away madly until I hyperventilate because the sea is against me with its strong current holding me against my will.

The sea decides what it wants me to see: turtles popping out of the seabed, manta rays gracefully floating alongside, being in the middle of the eye of a barracuda hurricane, a coral shelf as big as a car, a desert of bleached corals, the emptiness of the seabed with not a fish in sight, the memorials of death caused by the December 26 tsunami—a barren sea floor with not a soul or life in sight.

The sea decides what treasures I can discover: a black-tipped shark sleeping in an underwater cavern, a pike hiding from predators in the reef, an octopus under a dead tree trunk that escapes into my buddy's BCD, colorful mandarin fish mating at sunset, a deadly box jellyfish held in my gloved hands, pygmy seahorses in a fern—so tiny that to discover them is a journey itself.

Looking back, diving has taught me more about life, the ups and downs, the good and bad, and to accept and deal with life's challenges. Everything I learn and discover underwater applies to the many different aspects of my life. It has also taught me that life is very short: I have to live in the moment or I will miss the opportunities that come my way. I allow myself to forget all my sorrow, despair and disappointments when I dive into the deep blue sea and savor the feelings of peacefulness and calmness. There is nothing around me but fish and corals, big and small. Floating along in silence with only the sound of my breath—*inhale and*

exhale. An array of colors explodes in front of my eyes, colors that I never imagine I will discover again, an underwater rainbow as beautiful as the rainbow in the sky after a storm. As far as my eyes can see, I look into the depth of the ocean with nothing to anchor me. The deeper I get, the darker it turns. From the light blue sky to the deep navy blue, even blackness into the void. As the horizon darkens, the feeding frenzy of the underwater world starts and the watery landscape comes alive. Total darkness surrounds me but the sounds that I can hear are the little clicks in addition to my breathing. My senses overload as I cannot see what is around me, but the sea tells me it is alive and it anchors me to the depth of my soul.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood… In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man in spite of real sorrows…." The sea and diving have given me a new outlook on life, a different planet where I can float into and perspective on how it is to be that child again. Time and time again as I enter into the sea, I feel innocent all over again.

Teacher Takeaways

"One of the more difficult aspects of writing a good descriptive essay is to use the description to move beyond itself — to 'think through writing.' This author does it well. Interspersed between the details of diving are deliberate metaphors and analogies that enable the reader to gain access and derive deeper meanings. While the essay could benefit from a more structured system of organization and clearer unifying points, and while the language is at times a bit sentimental, this piece is also a treasure trove of sensory imagery (notably colors) and descriptive devices such as personification and recursion."

– Professor Fiscaletti

Comatose Dreams[25]

Her vision was tunneled in on his face. His eyes were wet and his mouth was open as if he was trying to catch his breath. He leaned in closer and wrapped his arms around her face and spoke to her in reassuring whispers that reminded her of a time long ago when he taught her to pray. As her vision widened the confusion increased. She could not move. She opened her mouth to speak, but could not. She wanted to sit up, but was restrained to the bed. She did not have the energy to sob, but she could feel tears roll down her cheek and didn't try to wipe them away. The anxiety overtook her and she fell back into a deep sleep.

She opened her eyes and tried to find reality. She was being tortured. Her feet were the size of pumpkins and her stomach was gutted all the way up her abdomen, her insides exposed for all to see. She was on display like an animal at the zoo. Tubes were coming out of her in multiple directions and her throat felt as if it were coated in chalk. She was conscious, but still a prisoner. Then a nurse walked in, pulled on one of her tubes, and sent her back into the abyss.

Eventually someone heard her speak, and with that she learned that if she complained enough she would get an injection. It gave her a beautiful head rush that temporarily dulled the pain. She adored it. She was no longer restrained to the bed, but still unable to move or eat. She was fed like baby. Each time she woke she was able to gather bits of information: she would not be going back to work, or school.

She began to heal. They removed a tube or two and she became more mobile. She was always tethered to a machine, like a dog on a leash. The pain from the surgeries still lingered and the giant opening in her stomach began to slowly close. The couch was her safe haven.

She came closer to dying during recovery than she had in the coma. The doctors made a mistake. She began to sweat profusely and shiver all at the same time. She vomited every twenty minutes like clockwork. It went on like that for days and she was ready to go. She wanted to slip back into her sleep. It was time to wake up from this nightmare. She pulled her hair and scratched her wrists trying to draw blood, anything to shake herself awake.

She sat on a beach remembering that nightmare. The sun beat down recharging a battery within her that had been running on empty for far too long. The waves washed up the length of her body and she sank deeper into the warm sand. She lay on her back taking it all in. Then laid her hand on top of her stomach, unconsciously she ran her fingers along a deep scar.

Teacher Takeaways

"This imagery is body-centered and predominantly tactile — though strange sights and sounds are also present. The narrow focus of the description symbolically mirrors the limitation of the comatose subject, which enhances the reader's experience. Simile abounds, and in its oddities (feet like pumpkins, something like chalk in the throat), adds to the eerie newness of each scene. While the paragraphs are a bit underdeveloped, and one or two clichés in need of removal, this little episode does an excellent job of conveying the visceral strangeness one might imagine to be associated with a comatose state. It's full of surprise."

– Professor Fiscaletti

The Devil in Green Canyon[26]

The sky was painted blue, with soft wisps of white clouds that decorated the edges of the horizon like a wedding cake. To the West, a bright orb filled the world with warm golden light which gives life to the gnarled mountain landscape. The light casted contrasting shadows against the rolling foot hills of the Cascade Mountain Range. A lone hawk circled above the narrow white water river that lay beneath the steep mountain side. Through the hawk's eyes the mountains look like small green waves that flow down from a massive snow white point. Mt. Hood sits high above its surrounding foot hills, like that special jewel that sits on a pedestal, above all the others in a fancy jewelry store. The hawk soars into the Salmon River Valley, with hope of capturing a tasty meal, an area also known as the Green Canyon.

For hundreds of years, the Salmon River has carved its home into the bedrock. Filled from bank to bank with tumbled boulders, all strewn across the river bed, some as big as a car. Crystal clear water cascades over and around the rocky course nature has made with its unique rapids and eddies for the native salmon and trout to navigate, flanked by thick old growth forest and the steep tree studded walls of the canyon. Along the river lies a narrow two-lane road, where people are able to access tall wonders of this wilderness. The road was paved for eight miles and the condition was rough, with large potholes and sunken grades.

In my beat up old Corolla, I drove down windy roads of the Salmon River. With the windows down and the stereo turned up, I watched trees that towered above me pass behind my view. A thin ribbon of blue sky peeked through the towering Douglas Fir and Sequoia trees. At a particular bend in the road, I drove past an opening in the trees. Here the river and the road came around a sharp turn in the canyon. A natural rock face, with a patch of gravel at its base, offered a place to park and enjoy the river. The water was calm and shallow, like a sheet of glass. I could see the rocky bottom all the way across the river, the rocks were round and smoothed by the continuous flow of water. It was peaceful as gentle flow of water created this tranquil symphony of rippling sounds.

As the road continued up the gentle slope guarded on the right by a thicket of bushes and tall colorful wild flowers giving red, purple, and white accents against lush green that dominated the landscape, followed by tall trees that quickly give way to a rocky precipice to the left. A yellow diamond shaped sign, complete with rusty edges and a few bullet holes indicated a one-lane bridge ahead. This was it! The beginning of the real journey. I parked my dusty Corolla as the gravel crunched under the balding tires, they skidded to a stop. As I turned the engine off, its irregular hum sputtered into silence. I could smell that hot oil that leaked from somewhere underneath the motor. I hopped out of the car and grabbed my large-framed backpack which was filled with enough food and gear for a few nights, I locked the car and took a short walk down the road. I arrived at the trail head, I was here to find peace, inspiration and discover a new place to feel freedom.

Devil's Peak. 16 miles. As the trail skirted its way along the cascading Salmon River. The well-traveled dirt path was packed hard by constant foot traffic with roots from the massive old fir trees, rocks and mud that frequently created tripping hazards along the

trail. Sword Fern, Salmon Berry and Oregon Grape are among the various small plant growth that lined the trail. Under the shade of the thick canopy, the large patches of shamrocks created an even covering over the rolling forest floor like the icing on a cake. The small shamrock forests are broken by mountainous nursery logs of old decaying trees. New life sprouts as these logs nature and host their kin. Varieties of maple fight for space among the ever-growing conifers that dominate the forest. Vine maple arches over the trail, bearded with hanging moss that forms natural pergolas.

It is easy to see why it is named Green Canyon, as the color touches everything. From the moss covering the floor, to the tops of the trees, many hues of green continue to paint the forest. These many greens are broken by the brown pillar like trunks of massive trees. Their rough bark provides a textural contrast to the soft leaves and pine needles. Wild flowers grow between the sun breaks in the trees and provide a rainbow of color. Near the few streams that form from artesian springs higher up, vicious patches of devil's glove, create a thorny wall that can tower above the trail. Their green stalk bristling with inch long barbs and the large leaves some over a foot long are covered with smaller needles.

I can hear the hum of bees in the distance collecting pollen from the assorted wild flowers. Their buzz mixes in with the occasional horse fly that lumbers past. For miles the trail, follows the river before it quickly ascends above the canyon. Winding steeply away from the river, the sound of rushing water began to fade, giving way to the serene and eerie quiet of the high mountains. Leaves and trees make a gentle sound as the wind brushes past them, but are overpowered by the sound of my dusty hiking boots slowly dragging me up this seemingly never-ending hill. I feel tired and sweat is beading up on my brow, exhausted as I am, I feel happy and relieved. Its moments like this that recharge the soul. I continue to climb, sweat and smile.

Undergrowth gives way to the harsh steep rock spires that crown the mountain top like ancient vertebra. The forest opens up to a steep cliff with a clearing offering a grand view. The spine of the mountain is visible, it hovers at 5000 feet above sea level and climbs to a point close to 5200 feet. Trees fight for position on the steep hillside as they flow down to the edge of the Salmon River. This a popular turn around point for day hikes. Not for me; I am going for the top. The peak is my destination where I will call home tonight. Devil's Peak is a destination. Not just a great view point but it is also home to a historic fire watchtower. Here visitors can explore the tower and even stay the night.

From the gorge viewpoint the trail switchbacks up several miles through dense high-altitude forests. Passing rocky ramparts and a few sheer cliff faces the path ends at an old dirt road with mis from bygone trucks that leave faint traces of life. A hand carved wooden sign, nailed to a tree at the continuation of the trail indicates another 2.6 miles to Devil's Peak. The trail is narrow as it traces the spine of the mountain before steeply carving around the peak. There are instances where the mountain narrows to a few feet, with sheer drops on both sides, like traversing a catwalk. The trees at this altitude are stunted compared to the giants that live below. Most trees here are only a foot or two thick and a mere 50 feet in height. The thick under growth has dwindled to small rhododendron bushes and clumps of bear grass. The frequently gusting wind has caused the trunks of the trees to grow into twisted gnarled forms. It is almost like some demon walked through the trail distorting everything as it passed. Foxglove and other wild flowers find root holds in warm sunny spots along the trail. Breaks in the thick forest provide snapshots of distant mountains: Mt. Hood is among the snowcapped peaks that pepper the distant mountains.

With sweat on my brow, forming beads that drip down my face, I reached the top. The trail came to a fork where another small sign indicates to go left. After a few feet the forest shrinks away and opens to a rocky field with expansive views that stretched for miles. There, standing its eternal watch, is the Devil's Peak watch tower. Its sun-bleached planks are a white contrast to the evergreen wall behind it. It was built by hand decades ago before portable power tools by hardened forest rangers. It has stood so long that the peak which once offered a 360-degree view now only has a few openings left between the mature trees that surround the grove in which the old devil stands, watching high above the green canyon. The lookout stands 30 feet in height. Its old weathered moss-covered wood shingled roof is topped with a weathered copper lightning rod. A staircase climbs steeply to the balcony that wraps around the tower. Only two feet wide, the deck still offers an amazing view where the forest allows. Mt. Hood stands proud to the North and the green mountains stretch South to the edge of the horizon.

The builders made window covers to protect the glass during storms. Once lined and supported with boards that have been notched to fit the railing, the tower is open filling the interior with daylight. In all the cabin is only twelve feet by twelve feet. The door has a tall window and three of the four walls have windows most of the way to the ceiling. The furnishing is modest, with a bed that has several pieces of foam and some sleeping bags to make mattress, it was complete with a pillow with no case. A table covered with carvings and some useful information and rules for the tower were taped to the surface. An old diary for the tower and a cup full of writing instruments next to it for visitors to share their experience lay closed in the middle of the table. In the South East

corner, on a hearth made of old brick sat an old iron wood stove. The door had an image of a mountain and trees molded into it. The top was flat and had room to use for a cook top. Someone left a small pile of wood next the stove. The paint on the inside was weathered and stripping. The floor boards creaked with each step. Whenever the wind gusted the windows rattled. The air inside the cabin was musty and dry. It smelled old. But the windows all pivot and open to make the inside feel like its outside and as soon as the windows were opened the old smell is replaced with the scent of fresh pine.

Surrounded by small patches of wild flowers and rocks, all ringed by a maturing forest Devil's Peak watchtower sits high above the Green Canyon. On a high point near the tower where solid rock pierces the ground there is a small round plaque cemented to the ancient basalt. It is a U.S. geological marker with the name of the peak and its elevation stamped into the metal. Standing on the marker I can see south through a large opening in the trees. Mountains like giant green walls fill the view. For miles, rock and earth rise up forming mountains, supporting the exquisite green forest.

The hawk circles, soaring high above the enchanting mountains. On a peak below, it sees prey skitter across a rock into a clump of juniper and swoops down for the hunt. There I stand on the tower's wooden balcony, watching the sunset. The blue horizon slowly turned pale before glowing orange. Mt. Hood reflected the changing colors, from orange to a light purple. Soon stars twinkled above and the mountain faded to dark. The day is done. Here in this moment, I am.

Teacher Takeaways

"This author's description is frequent and rich with detail; I especially like the thorough inventory of wildlife throughout the essay, although it does get a feel a bit burdensome at times. I can clearly envision the setting, at times even hearing the sounds and feeling the textures the author describes. Depending on their goals in revision, this author might make some global adjustments to pacing (so the reader can move through a bit more quickly and fluidly). At the very least, this student should spend some time polishing up mechanical errors. I noticed two recurring issues: (1) shifting verb tense [the author writes in both present and past tense, where it would be more appropriate to stick with one or the other]; and (2) sentence fragments, run-ons, and comma splices [all errors that occur because a sentence combines clauses ungrammatically]."

– Professor Wilhjelm

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.8: Telling a story

4.8.1: Section Introduction- Telling a Story

4.8.2: Techniques

4.8.3: Activities

4.8.4: Model Texts by Student Authors

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4.8.1: Section Introduction- Telling a Story

Section Introduction- Telling a Story

"We're all stories, in the end." – Steven Moffat, Doctor Who[27] Whether or not you've seen a single episode of Doctor Who, you can appreciate this quote. I love it for its ambiguities.[28] As I can tell, we can interpret it in at least four ways:

But perhaps that's enough abstraction: **narration** is a rhetorical mode that you likely engage on a daily basis, and one that has held significance in every culture in human history. Even when we're not deliberately telling stories, storytelling often underlies our writing and thinking:

- Historians synthesize and interpret events of the past; a history book is one of many narratives of our cultures and civilizations.
- Chemists analyze observable data to determine cause-and-effect behaviors of natural and synthetic materials; a lab report is a sort of narrative about elements (characters) and reactions (plot).
- Musical composers evoke the emotional experience of story through instrumentation, motion, motifs, resolutions, and so on; a song is a narrative that may not even need words.

What makes for an interesting, well-told story *in writing*? In addition to description, your deliberate choices in narration can create impactful, beautiful, and entertaining stories.

"Story" by rossyyume is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Chapter Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Definition
characterization	the process by which an author builds characters; can be accomplished directly or indirectly.
dialogue	a communication between two or more people. Can include any mode of communication, including speech, texting, e-mail, Facebook post, body language, etc.
dynamic character	a character who noticeably changes within the scope of a narrative, typically as a result of the plot events and/or other characters. Contrast with static character.
epiphany	a character's sudden realization of a personal or universal truth. See dynamic character.
Flat character	a character who is minimally detailed, only briefly sketched or named. Generally less central to the events and relationships portrayed in a narrative. Contrast wi
mood	the emotional dimension which a reader experiences while encountering a text. Compare with tone.
multimedia / multigenre	a term describing a text that combines more than one media and/or more than one genre (e.g., an essay with embedded images; a portfolio with essays, poetry, ar song reviews).
narration	a rhetorical mode involving the construction and relation of stories. Typically integrates description as a technique.
narrative pacing	the speed with which a story progresses through plot events. Can be influenced by reflective and descriptive writing.
narrative scope	the boundaries of a narrative in time, space, perspective, and focus.
narrative sequence	the order of events included in a narrative.
plot	the events included within the scope of a narrative.
point-of-view	the perspective from which a story is told, determining both grammar (pronouns) and perspective (speaker's awareness of events, thoughts, and circumstances).
round character	a character who is thoroughly characterized and dimensional, detailed with attentive description of their traits and behaviors. Contrast with flat character.
static character	a character who remains the same throughout the narrative. Contrast with dynamic character.
tone	the emotional register of the text. Compare with mood.

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4.8.2: Techniques

Techniques

Plot Shapes and Form

Plot is one of the basic elements of every story: put simply, plot refers to the actual events that take place within the bounds of your narrative. Using our rhetorical situation vocabulary, we can identify "plot" as the primary **subject** of a descriptive personal narrative. Three related elements to consider are **scope**, **sequence**, and **pacing**.

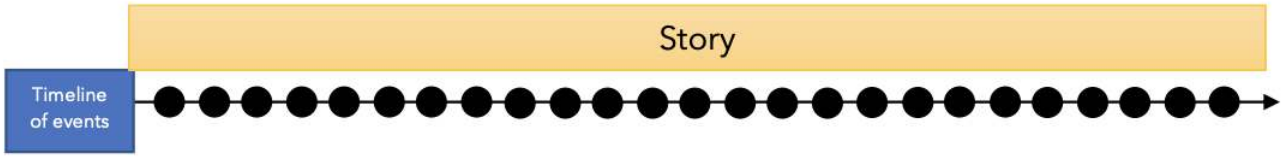
Scope

The term **scope** refers to the boundaries of your plot. Where and when does it begin and end? What is its focus? What background information and details does your story require? I often think about narrative scope as the edges of a photograph: a photo, whether of a vast landscape or a microscopic organism, has boundaries. Those boundaries inform the viewer's perception. In this example, the scope of the left photo allows for a story about a neighborhood in San Francisco. In the middle, it is a story about the fire escape, the clouds. On the right, the scope of the story directs our attention to the birds. In this way, narrative scope impacts the content you include **and** your reader's perception of that content in context.

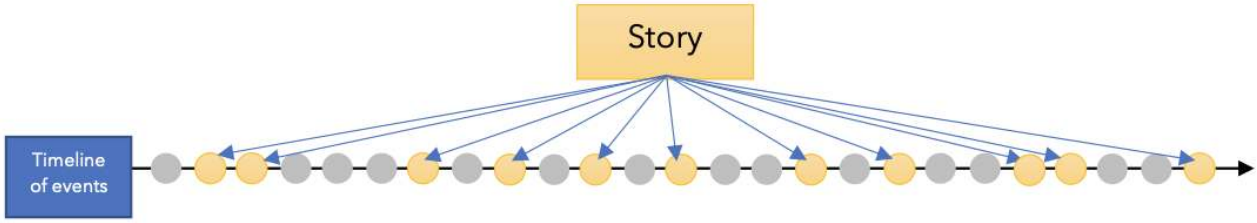
"SF Neighborhood" by SBT4NOW is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

The way we determine scope varies based on rhetorical situation, but I can say generally that many developing writers struggle with a scope that is too broad: writers often find it challenging to zero in on the events that drive a story and prune out extraneous information.

Consider, as an example, how you might respond if your friend asked what you did last weekend. If you began with, "I woke up on Saturday morning, rolled over, checked my phone, fell back asleep, woke up, pulled my feet out from under the covers, put my feet on the floor, stood up, stretched…" then your friend might have stopped listening by the time you get to the really good stuff. Your scope is too broad, so you're including details that distract or bore your reader. Instead of listing every detail in order like this:



… you should consider narrowing your scope, focusing instead on the important, interesting, and unique plot points (events) like this:



You might think of this as the difference between a series of snapshots and a roll of film: instead of twenty-four frames per second video, your entire story might only be a few photographs aligned together.

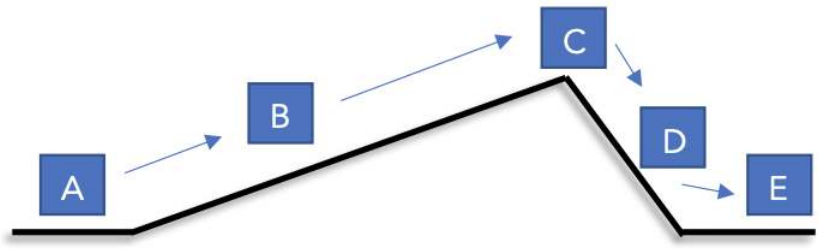
It may seem counterintuitive, but we can often say more by digging deep into a few ideas or events, instead of trying to relate every idea or event.

The most impactful stories are often those that represent something, so your scope should focus on the details that fit into the bigger picture. To return to the previous example, you could tell me more about your weekend by sharing a specific detail than every detail. “Brushing my teeth Saturday morning, I didn’t realize that I would probably have a scar from wrestling that bear on Sunday” reveals more than “I woke up on Saturday morning, rolled over, checked my phone, fell back asleep, woke up, pulled my feet out from under the covers, put my feet on the floor, stood up, stretched….” Not only have you foregrounded the more interesting event, but you have also foreshadowed that you had a harrowing, adventurous, and unexpected weekend.

Sequence and Pacing

The **sequence** and **pacing** of your plot—the order of the events and the amount of time you give to each event, respectively—will determine your reader’s experience. There are an infinite number of ways you might structure your story, and the shape of your story is worth deep consideration. Although the traditional forms for narrative sequence are not your only options, let’s take a look at a few tried-and-true shapes your plot might take.

You might recognize Freytag’s Pyramid[29] from other classes you’ve taken:



A. **Exposition**: Here, you’re setting the scene, introducing characters, and preparing the reader for the journey.

B. **Rising action**: In this part, things start to happen. You (or your characters) encounter conflict, set out on a journey, meet people, etc.

C. **Climax**: This is the peak of the action, the main showdown, the central event toward which your story has been building.

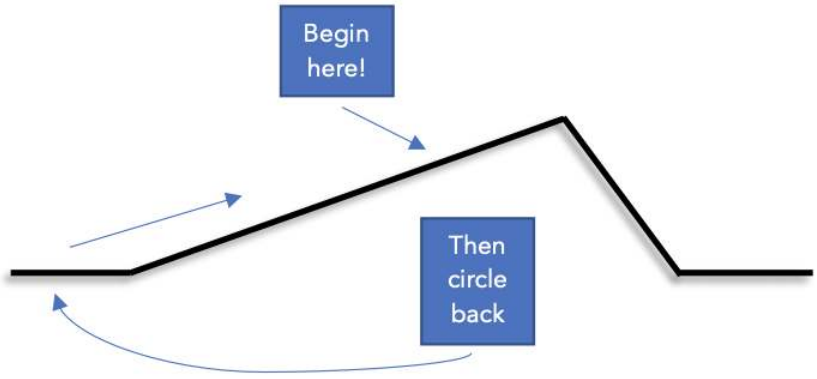
D. **Falling action**: Now things start to wind down. You (or your characters) come away from the climactic experience changed—at the very least, you are wiser for having had that experience.

E. **Resolution**: Also known as dénouement, this is where all the loose ends get tied up. The central conflict has been resolved, and everything is back to normal, but perhaps a bit different.

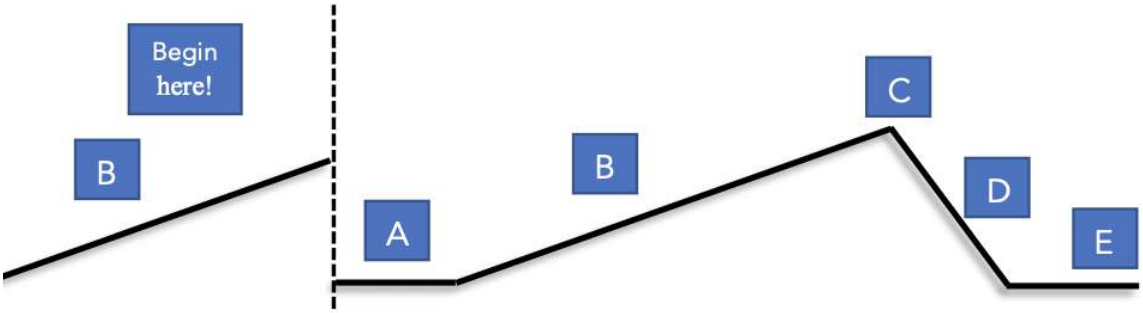
This narrative shape is certainly a familiar one. Many films, TV shows, plays, novels, and short stories follow this track. But it's not without its flaws. You should discuss with your classmates and instructors what shortcomings you see in this classic plot shape. What assumptions does it rely on? How might it limit a storyteller? Sometimes, I tell my students to "Start the story where the story starts"—often, steps A and B in the diagram above just delay the most descriptive, active, or meaningful parts of the story. If nothing else, we should note that it is not necessarily the best way to tell your story, and definitely not the only way.

Another classic technique for narrative sequence is known as in **medias res**—literally, "in the middle of things." As you map out your plot in pre-writing or experiment with during the drafting and revision process, you might find this technique a more active and exciting way to begin a story.

In the earlier example, the plot is chronological, linear, and continuous: the story would move smoothly from beginning to end with no interruptions. *In medias res* instead suggests that you start your story with action rather than exposition, focusing on an exciting, imagistic, or important scene. Then, you can circle back to an earlier part of the story to fill in the blanks for your reader. Using the previously discussed plot shape, you might visualize it like this:



or...



You can experiment with your sequence in a variety of other ways, which might include also making changes to your scope: instead of a continuous story, you might have a series of fragments with specific scope (like photographs instead of video), as is exemplified by "The Pot Calling the Kettle Black…." Instead of chronological order, you might bounce around in time or space, like in "Parental Guidance," or in reverse, like "21." Some of my favorite narratives reject traditional narrative sequence.

How will your choices of narrative scope, sequence, and pacing impact your reader's experience?

I include *pacing* with *sequence* because a change to one often influences the other. Put simply, pacing refers to the speed and fluidity with which a reader moves through your story. You can play with pacing by moving more quickly through events, or even by experimenting with sentence and paragraph length. Consider how the "flow" of the following examples differs:

A. The train screeched to a halt. A flock of pigeons took flight as the conductor announced, "We'll be stuck here for a few minutes."

B. Lost in my thoughts, I shuddered as the train ground to a full stop in the middle of an intersection. I was surprised, jarred by the unannounced and abrupt jerking of the car. I sought clues for our stop outside the window. All I saw were pigeons as startled and clueless as I.

I recommend the student essay "Under the Knife," which does excellent work with pacing, in addition to making a strong creative choice with narrative scope.

The position from which your story is told will help shape your reader's experience, the language your narrator and characters use, and even the plot itself. You might recognize this from *Dear White People* Volume 1 or *Arrested Development* Season 4, both Netflix TV series. Typically, each episode in these seasons explores similar plot events, but from a different character's perspective. Because of their unique vantage points, characters can tell different stories about the same realities.

"Different perspective" by Carlos ZGZ is in the Public Domain, CC0

This is, of course, true for our lives more generally. In addition to our differences in knowledge and experiences, we also interpret and understand events differently. In our writing, narrative position is informed by point-of-view and the emotional valences I refer to here as tone and mood.

point-of-view (POV): the perspective from which a story is told.

- This is a grammatical phenomenon—i.e., it decides pronoun use—but, more importantly, it impacts tone, mood, scope, voice, and plot.[30]

Although point-of-view will influence tone and mood, we can also consider what feelings we want to convey and inspire independently as part of our narrative position.

tone: the emotional register of the story's language.

- What emotional state does the narrator of the story (not the author, but the speaker) seem to be in? What emotions are you trying to imbue in your writing?

mood: the emotional register a reader experiences.[31]

- What emotions do you want your reader to experience? Are they the same feelings you experienced at the time?

A Non-Comprehensive Breakdown of POV

			Examples:
1st person	Narrator uses 1st person pronouns (I/me/mine or us/we/ours)	Can include internal monologue (motives, thoughts, feelings) of the narrator. Limited certainty of motives, thoughts, or feelings of other characters	I tripped on the last stair, preoccupied by what my sister had said, and felt my stomach drop.
2nd person	Narrator uses 2nd person pronouns (you/your)	Speaks to the reader, as if the reader is the protagonist OR uses apostrophe to speak to an absent or unidentified person	Your breath catches as you feel the phantom step. O, staircase, how you keep me awake at night.
3rd person limited	Narrator uses 3rd person pronouns (he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/they/ theirs)	Sometimes called "close" third person. Observes and narrates but sticks near one or two characters, in contrast with 3rd person omniscient.	He was visibly frustrated by his sister's nonchalance and wasn't watching his step.
3rd person omniscient	Narrator uses 3rd person pronouns (he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/they/ theirs)	Observes and narrates from an all-knowing perspective. Can include internal monologue (motives, thoughts, feelings) of all characters.	Beneath the surface, his sister felt regretful. *Why did I tell him that?* she wondered.
stream-of-consciousness	Narrator uses inconsistent pronouns, or no pronouns at all	Approximates the digressive, wandering, and ungrammatical thought processes of the narrator.	But now, a thousand empty—*where*?—and she, with head shake, will be fine—AHH!

Typically, you will tell your story from the first-person point-of-view, but personal narratives can also be told from a different perspective; I recommend "Comatose Dreams" to illustrate this at work. As you're developing and revising your writing, try to inhabit different authorial positions: What would change if you used the third person POV instead of first person? What different meanings would your reader find if you told this story with a different tone—bitter instead of nostalgic, proud rather than embarrassed, sarcastic rather than genuine?

Furthermore, there are many rhetorical situations that call for different POVs. (For instance, you may have noticed that this book uses the second-person very frequently.) So, as you evaluate which POV will be most effective for your current rhetorical situation, bear in mind that the same choice might inform your future writing.

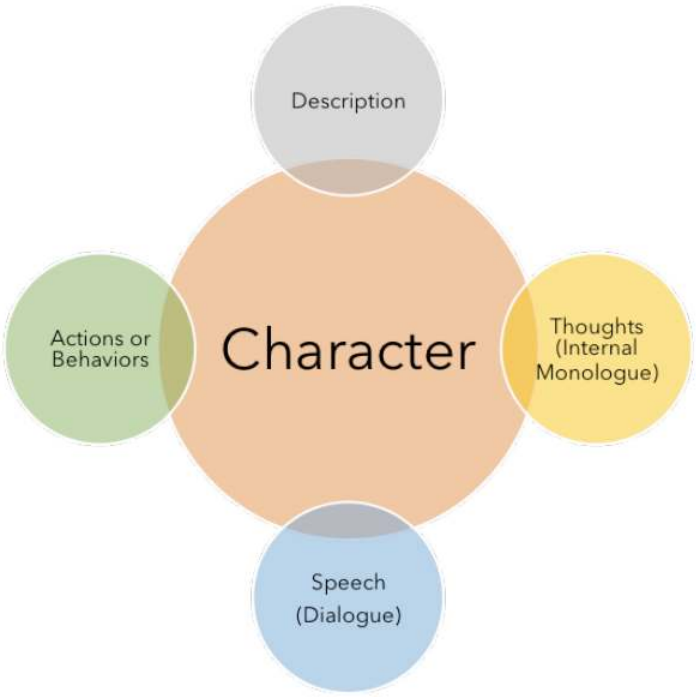
Whether your story is fiction or nonfiction, you should spend some time thinking about **characterization**: the development of characters through actions, descriptions, and dialogue. Your audience will be more engaged with and sympathetic toward your narrative if they can vividly imagine the characters as real people.

Like description, characterization relies on specificity. Consider the following contrast in character descriptions:

A. My mom is great. She is an average-sized brunette with brown eyes. She is very loving and supportive, and I know I can rely on her. She taught me everything I know.

B. In addition to some of my father's idiosyncrasies, however, he is also one of the most kind-hearted and loving people in my life. One of his signature actions is the 'cry-smile,' in which he simultaneously cries and smiles any time he experiences a strong positive emotion (which is almost daily).[32]

How does the “cry-smile” detail enhance the characterization of the speaker’s parent?



To break it down to process, characterization can be accomplished in two ways:

a) Directly, through specific description of the character—What kind of clothes do they wear? What do they look, smell, sound like?—or,

b) Indirectly, through the behaviors, speech, and thoughts of the character— What kind of language, dialect, or register do they use? What is the tone, inflection, and timbre of their voice? How does their manner of speaking reflect their attitude toward the listener? How do their actions reflect their traits? What’s on their mind that they won’t share with the world?

Thinking through these questions will help you get a better understanding of each character (often including yourself!). You do not need to include all the details, but they should inform your description, dialogue, and narration.

Round characters...	are very detailed, requiring attentive description of their traits and behaviors.	Your most important characters should be round: the added detail will help your reader better visualize, understand, and care about them.
Flat characters...	are minimally detailed, only briefly sketched or named.	Less important characters should take up less space and will therefore have less detailed characterization.
Static characters...	remain the same throughout the narrative.	Even though all of us are always changing, some people will behave and appear the same throughout the course of your story. Static characters can serve as a reference point for dynamic characters to show the latter’s growth.
Dynamic characters...	noticeably change within the narrative, typically as a result of the events.	Most likely, you will be a dynamic character in your personal narrative because such stories are centered around an impactful experience, relationship, or place. Dynamic characters learn and grow over time, either gradually or with an epiphany.

Dialogue[33]

dialogue: communication between two or more characters.

"Conversation" by Ray Wewerka is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Think of the different conversations you've had today, with family, friends, or even classmates. Within each of those conversations, there were likely pre-established relationships that determined how you talked to each other: each is its own rhetorical situation. A dialogue with your friends, for example, may be far different from one with your family. These relationships can influence tone of voice, word choice (such as using slang, jargon, or lingo), what details we share, and even what language we speak.

As we've seen above, good dialogue often demonstrates the traits of a character or the relationship of characters. From reading or listening to how people talk to one another, we often infer the relationships they have. We can tell if they're having an argument or conflict, if one is experiencing some internal conflict or trauma, if they're friendly acquaintances or cold strangers, even how their emotional or professional attributes align or create opposition.

Often, dialogue does more than just one thing, which makes it a challenging tool to master. When dialogue isn't doing more than one thing, it can feel flat or expositional, like a bad movie or TV show where everyone is saying their feelings or explaining what just happened. For example, there is a difference between "No thanks, I'm not hungry" and "I've told you, I'm not hungry." The latter shows frustration, and hints at a previous conversation. Exposition can have a place in dialogue, but we should use it deliberately, with an awareness of how natural or unnatural it may sound. We should be aware how dialogue impacts the pacing of the narrative. Dialogue can be musical and create tempo, with either quick back and forth, or long drawn out pauses between two characters. Rhythm of a dialogue can also tell us about the characters' relationship and emotions.

We can put some of these thoughts to the test using the exercises in the Activities section of this chapter to practice writing dialogue.

Narration, as you already know, can occur in a variety of media: TV shows, music, drama, and even Snapchat Stories practice narration in different ways. Your instructor may ask you to write a traditional personal narrative (using only prose), but if you are given the opportunity, you might also consider what other media or genres might inform your narration. Some awesome narratives use a **multimedia** or **multigenre** approach, synthesizing multiple different forms, like audio and video, or nonfiction, poetry, and photography.

In addition to the limitations and opportunities presented by your rhetorical situation, choosing a medium also depends on the opportunities and limitations of different forms. To determine which tool or tools you want to use for your story, you should consider which medium (or combination of media) will help you best accomplish your purpose. Here's a non-comprehensive list of storytelling tools you might incorporate in place of or in addition to traditional prose:

- Images
- Poetry
- Video
- Audio recording
- "Found" texts (fragments of other authors' works reframed to tell a different story)
- Illustrations
- Comics, manga, or other graphic storytelling

- Journal entries or series of letters
- Plays, screenplays, or other works of drama
- Blogs and social media postings

Although each of these media is a vehicle for delivering information, it is important to acknowledge that each different medium will have a different impact on the audience; in other words, the medium can change the message itself.

There are a number of digital tools available that you might consider for your storytelling medium, as well.[34]

Video: Storytelling with Robyn Vazquez[35]

Video of Storytelling with Robyn Vazquez is available via PSU Media Space.

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4.8.3: Activities

Idea Generation: What Stories Can I Tell?

You may already have an idea of an important experience in your life about which you could tell a story. Although this might be a significant experience, it is most definitely not the only one worth telling. (Remember: first idea ≠ best idea.)

Just as with description, good narration isn't about shocking content but rather about effective and innovative writing. In order to broaden your options before you begin developing your story, complete the organizer on the following pages.

Then, choose three of the list items from this page that you think are especially unique or have had a serious impact on your life experience. On a separate sheet of paper, free-write about each of your three list items for no less than five minutes per item.

List five places that are significant to you (real, fictional, or imaginary)	List ten people who have influenced your life in some way (positive or negative, acquainted or not, real or fictional)	
1)	1)	1)
8)	12)	16)
9)	13)	17)
10)	14)	18)
11)	15)	2)

List ten ways that you identify yourself (roles, adjectives, or names)		List three obstacles you've overcome to be where you are today
	1)	
1)	23)	1)
19)	24)	
		2)
20)	25)	
21)	26)	3)
22)	2)	

List three difficult moments – tough decisions, traumatic or challenging experiences, or troubling circumstances		
1)	2)	3)

This exercise will help you develop a variety of options for your story, considered especially in the context of your entire life trajectory.

First, brainstorm at least ten moments or experiences that you consider influential— moments that in some way impacted your identity, your friendships, your worldview— for the better or for the worse. Record them in the table below.

Then, rate those experiences on a degree of “awesomeness,” “pleasurability,” or something else along those lines, on a scale of 0 – 10, with 10 being the hands down best moment of your life and 0 being the worst.

Next, plot those events on the graph paper on the back of this page. Each point is an event; the x-axis is your age, and the y-axis is the factor of positivity. Connect the points with a line.

Finally, circle three of the events/experiences on your graph. On a clean sheet of paper, free-write about each of those three for at least four minutes.[36]

Your age	Event, moment, or experience	Awesomeness Factor (0-10)

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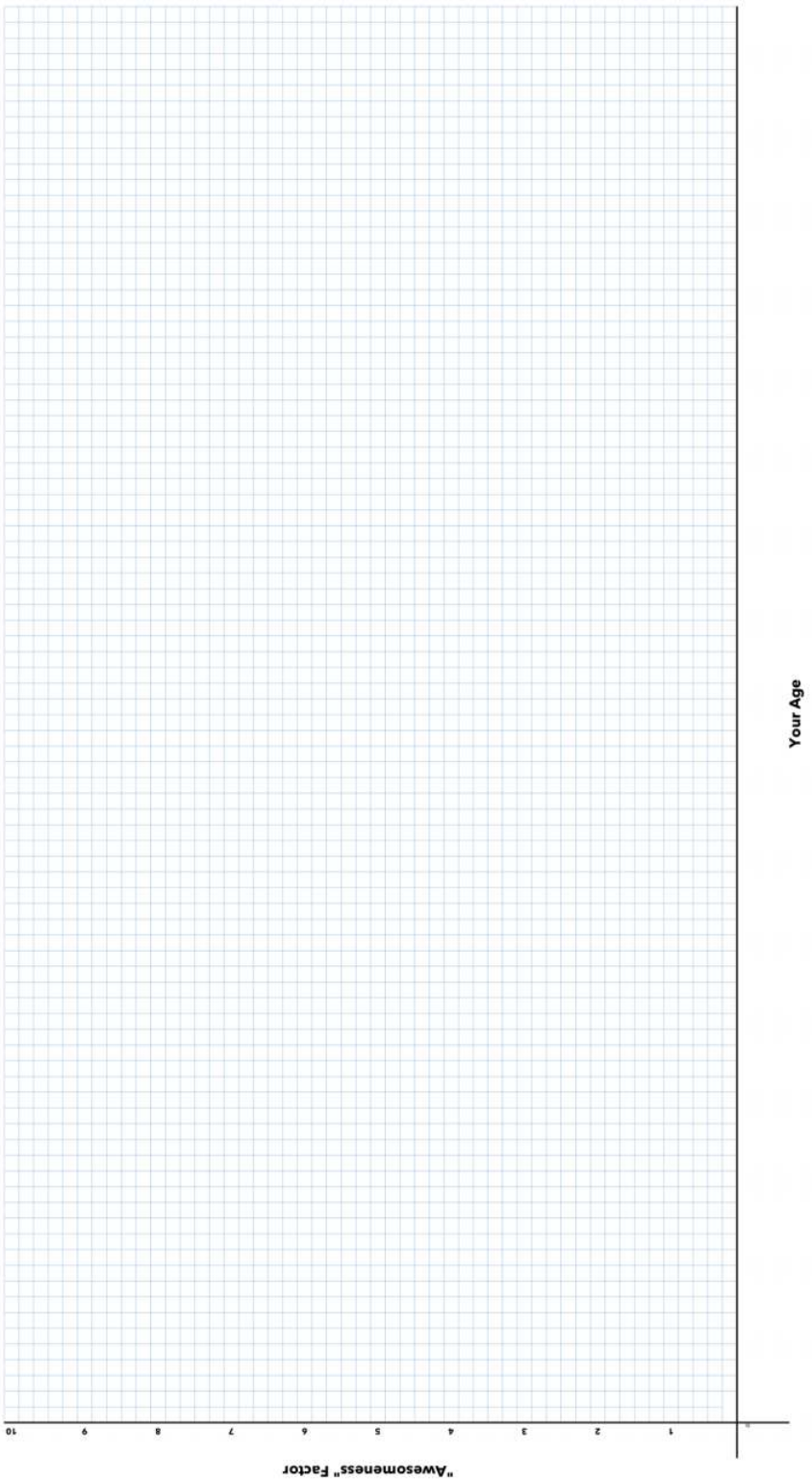

Experimenting with Voice and Dialogue[37]

Complete the following three exercises to think through the language your characters use and the relationships they demonstrate through dialogue. If you've started your assignment, you can use these exercises to generate content.

The Secret

1) Choose any two professions for two imaginary characters.

2) Give the two characters a secret that they share with one another. As you might imagine, neither of them would reveal that secret aloud, but they might discuss it. (To really challenge yourself, you might also come up with a reason that their secret must be a secret: Is it socially unacceptable to talk about? Are they liable to get in trouble if people find out? Will they ruin a surprise?)

3) Write an exchange between those characters about the secret using only their words (i.e., no "he said" or "she said," but rather only the language they use). Allow the secret to be revealed to the reader in how the characters speak, what they say, and how they say it. Pay attention to the subtext of what's being said and how it's being said. How would these characters discuss their secret without revealing it to eavesdroppers? (Consider Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" as a model.)

4) Draw a line beneath your dialogue. Now, imagine that only one of the characters has a secret. Write a new dialogue in which one character is trying to keep that secret from the other. Again, consider how the speakers are communicating: what language do they use? What sort of tone? What does that reveal about their relationship?

The Overheard

1) Go to a public space and eavesdrop on a conversation. (Try not to be too creepy—be considerate and respectful of the people.) You don't need to take avid notes, but observe natural inflections, pauses, and gestures. What do these characteristics imply about the relationship between the speakers?

2) Jot down a fragment of striking, interesting, or weird dialogue.

3) Now, use that fragment of dialogue to imagine a digital exchange: consider that fragment as a Facebook status, a text message, or a tweet. Then, write at least ten comments or replies to that fragment.

4) Reflect on the imaginary digital conversation you just created. What led you to make the choices you made? How does digital dialogue differ from real-life dialogue?

Beyond Words

As you may have noticed in the previous exercises, dialogue is about more than just what the words say: our verbal communication is supplemented by inflection, tone, body language, and pace, among other things. With a partner, exchange the following lines. Without changing the words, try to change the meaning using your tone, inflection, body language, etc.

A	B
"I don't want to talk about it."	"Leave me alone."
"Can we talk about it?"	"What do you want from me?"
"I want it."	"You can't have it."
"Have you seen her today?"	"Why?"

After each round, debrief with your partner; jot down a few notes together to describe how your variations changed the meaning of each word. Then, consider how you might capture and relay these different deliveries using written language— what some writers call "dialogue tags." Dialogue tags try to reproduce the nuance of our spoken and unspoken languages (e.g., "he muttered," "she shouted in frustration," "they insinuated, crossing their arms").

"Body Language" by Paolo Fefe' is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0

Using Images to Tell a Story

Even though this textbook focuses on writing as a means to tell stories, you can also construct thoughtful and unique narratives using solely images, or using images to supplement your writing. A single photograph can tell a story, but a series will create a more cohesive narrative. To experiment with this medium, try the following activity.

1) Using your cell phone or a digital camera, take at least one photograph (of yourself, events, and/or your surroundings) each hour for one day.

2) Compile the photos and arrange them in chronological order. Choose any five photos that tell a story about part or all of your day.

- How did you determine which photos to remove? What does this suggest about your narrative scope?
- Where might you want to add photos or text? Why?

To consider models of this kind of narrative, check out Al Jazeera's "In Pictures" series. In 2014, a friend of mine recorded a one-second video every day for a year, creating a similar kind of narrative.

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4.8.4: Model Texts by Student Authors

Model Texts by Student Authors

Under the Knife[38]

The white fluorescent lights mirrored off the waxed and buffed vinyl flooring. Doctors and nurses beelined through small congregations of others conversing. Clocks were posted at every corner of every wall and the sum of the quiet ticking grew to an audible drone. From the vinyl floors to the desks where decade old Dell computers sat, a sickly gray sucked all the life from the room. The only source of color was the rainbow circle crocheted blanket that came customary for minors about to undergo surgery. It was supposed to be a token of warmth and happiness, a blanket you could find life in; however, all I found in the blanket was an unwanted pity.

Three months ago doctors diagnosed me with severe scoliosis. They told me I would need to pursue orthopedic surgery to realign my spine. For years I endured through back pain and discomfort, never attributing it to the disease. In part, I felt as if it was my fault, that me letting the symptoms go unattended for so long led it to become so extreme. Those months between the diagnosis and the surgery felt like mere seconds. Every day I would recite to myself that everything would be okay and that I had nothing to worry about. However, then minutes away from sedation, I felt like this bed I was in—only three feet off the ground—would put me six feet under.

The doctors informed me beforehand of the potential complications that could arise from surgery. Partial paralysis, infection, death, these words echoed throughout the chasms of my mind. Anxiety overwhelmed me; I was a dying animal surrounded by ravenous vultures, drool dripping awaiting their next meal. My palms were a disgusting swamp of sweat that gripped hard onto the white sheets that covered me. A feeling of numbness lurked into my extremities and slowly infected its way throughout my body

The vinyl mattress cover I was on felt like a porcelain toilet seat during a cold winter morning. It did not help my discomfort that I had nothing on but a sea blue gown that covered only the front and ankle high socks that seemed like bathroom scrubbers. A heart rate monitor clamp was tightly affixed onto my index finger that had already lost circulation minutes ago. The monitor was the snitch giving away my growing anxiety; my heart rate began to increase as I awaited surgery. Attached to the bed frame was a remote that could adjust almost every aspect of the bed. I kept the bed at an almost right angle: I wanted to be aware of my surroundings.

My orthopediatrician and surgeon, Dr. Halsey, paced in from the hallway and gave away a forced smile to ease me into comfort. The doctor shot out his hand and I hesitantly stuck out mine for the handshake. I've always hated handshakes; my hands are incredibly sweaty and I did not want to disgust him with my soggy tofu hands. He asked me how my day was so far, and I responded with a concise "Alright." Truth was, my day so far was pretty lackluster and tiring. I had woken up before the birds had even begun to chirp, I ate nothing for breakfast, and I was terrified out of my mind. This Orthopedic Surgeon, this man, this human, was fully in charge of the surgery. Dr. Halsey and other surgeons deal with one of the most delicate and fragile things in the world—people's lives. The amount of pressure and nerves he must face on an everyday basis is incredible. His calm and reserved nature made me believe that he was confident in himself, and that put me more at ease.

An overweight nurse wheeled in an IV with a bag of solution hooked to the side. "Which arm do you prefer for your IV?" she inquired.

Needles used to terrify me. They were tiny bullets that pierced through your skin like mosquitos looking for dinner, but by now I had grown accustomed to them. Like getting stung by a bee for the first time, my first time getting blood taken was a grueling adventure. "Left, I guess," I let out with a long anxiety-filled sigh.

The rubber band was thick and dark blue, the same color as the latex gloves she wore. I could feel my arm pulse in excitement as they tightly wrapped the rubber band right above my elbow.

"Oh, wow! Look at that vein pop right out!" The nurse exclaimed as she inspected the bulging vein.

I tried to distract myself from the nurse so I wouldn't hesitate as the IV was going in. I stared intently at the speckled ceiling tiles. They were the same ones used in schools. As my eyes began to relax, the dots on the ceiling started to transform into different

shapes and animals. There was a squirrel, a seal, and a do—I felt pain shock through my body as the IV needle had infiltrated into my arm.

Dr. Halsey had one arm planted to the bottom end of the bed frame and the other holding the clipboard that was attached to the frame. “We’re going to pump two solutions through you. The first will be the saline, and the second will be the sedation and anesthesia.” The nurse leaned over and punched in buttons connected to the IV. After a loud beep, I felt a cooling sensation run down my arm. I felt like a criminal, prosecuted for murder, and now was one chemical away from finishing the cocktail execution. My eyes darted across the room; I was searching for hope I could cling to.

My mother was sitting on a chair on the other side of the room, eyes slowly and silently sweating. She clutched my father’s giant calloused hands as he browsed the internet on his phone. While I would say that I am more similar to my mother than my father, I think we both dealt with our anxiety in similar ways. Just like my father, I too needed a visual distraction to avoid my anxiety. “I love you,” my mother called out.

All I did was a slight nod in affirmation. I was too fully engulfed by my own thoughts to even try and let out a single syllable. What is my purpose in life? Have I been successful in making others proud? Questions like these crept up in my mind like an unwanted visitor.

“Here comes the next solution,” Dr. Halsey announced while pointing his pen at the IV bags. “10…,” he began his countdown.

I needed answers to the questions that had invaded my mind. So far in life, I haven’t done anything praiseworthy or even noteworthy. I am the bottom of the barrel, a dime a dozen, someone who will probably never influence the future to come. However, in those final seconds, I realized that I did not really care.

“7...,” Dr. Halsey continued the countdown.

I’ve enjoyed my life. I’ve had my fun and shared many experiences with my closest friends. If I’m not remembered in a few years after I die, then so be it. I’m proud of my small accomplishments so far.

“4…” Although I am not the most decorated of students, I can say that at least I tried my hardest. All that really mattered was that I was happy. I had hit tranquility; my mind had halted. I was out even before Dr. Halsey finished the countdown. I was at ease.

Teacher Takeaways

“I like how the scope of the narrative is specifically limited to the hours leading up to the surgery. That shifts the focus on the author’s anticipation and anxiety, rather than the surgery itself. This essay also successfully employs slow, deliberate pacing in each section, reflecting that sense of anticipation and anxiety. However, at some points this slow pacing results in minute descriptions of details that don’t clearly advance the narrative, making the essay feel bloated at times and diminishing the effectiveness of those sections where the pacing is more appropriate.”

– Professor Dunham

Breathing Easy[39]

Most people’s midlife crises happen when they’re well into adulthood; mine happened when I was twelve. For most of my childhood and into my early teen years, I was actively involved in community theater. In the fall of 2010, I was in the throes of puberty as well as in the middle of rehearsals for a production of *Pinocchio*, in which I played the glamorous and highly coveted role of an unnamed puppet. On this particular day, however, I was not onstage rehearsing with all the other unnamed puppets as I should’ve been; instead, I was locked backstage in a single-stall bathroom, dressed in my harlequin costume and crying my eyes

out on the freezing tile floor, the gaudy red and black makeup dripping down my face until I looked like the villain from a low-budget horror movie.

The timing of this breakdown was not ideal. I don't remember exactly what happened in the middle of rehearsal that triggered this moment of hysteria, but I know it had been building for a long time, and for whatever reason, that was the day the dam finally broke. At the time, I had pinpointed the start of my crisis to a moment several months earlier when I started questioning my sexuality. Looking back now, though, I can see that this aspect of my identity had been there since childhood, when as a seven-year-old I couldn't decide if I would rather marry Aladdin or Princess Jasmine.

Up until the age of 16, I lived in Amarillo, Texas, a flat, brown city in the middle of a huge red state. Even though my parents had never been blatantly homophobic in front of me, I grew up in a conservative religious community that was fiercely cisheteronormative. My eighth-grade health teacher kicked off our unit on sex education with a contemptuous, "We aren't going to bother learning about safe sex for homosexuals. We're only going to talk about normal relationships." Another time, when I told a friend about a secret I had (unrelated to my sexuality), she responded with, "That's not too bad. At least you're not gay," her lips curling in disdain as if simply saying the sinful word aloud left a bad taste in her mouth.

I laid in a crumpled mess on that bathroom floor, crying until my head throbbed and the linoleum beneath me became slick with tears and dollar-store face paint. By the time my crying slowed and I finally pulled myself up off the floor, my entire body felt weighed down by the secret I now knew I had to keep, and despite being a perfectionist at heart, I couldn't find it within myself to care that I'd missed almost all of rehearsal. I looked at my tear-streaked face in the mirror, makeup smeared all over my burning cheeks, and silently admitted to myself what I had subconsciously known for a long time: that I wasn't straight, even though I didn't know exactly what I was yet. At the time, even thinking the words "I might be gay" to myself felt like a death sentence. I promised myself then and there that I would never tell anyone; that seemed to be the only option.

For several years, I managed to keep my promise to myself. Whereas before I had spent almost all of my free time with my friends, after my episode in the bathroom, I became isolated, making up excuses anytime a friend invited me out for fear of accidentally getting too comfortable and letting my secret slip. I spent most of middle school and the beginning of high school so far back in the closet I could barely breathe or see any light. I felt like the puppet I'd played in that production of Pinocchio—tied down by fear and shame, controlled by other people and their expectations of me rather than having the ability to be honest about who I was.

Just as I ended up breaking down in that theater bathroom stall when I was twelve, though, I eventually broke down again. My freshman year of high school was one of the worst years of my life. Struggling with mental illness and missing large portions of school as I went in and out of psychiatric hospitals was hard enough, but on top of all of that, I was also lying about a core part of my identity to everyone I knew. After a particularly rough night, I sat down and wrote a letter to my parents explaining that I was pansexual (or attracted to all genders and gender identities). "I've tried to stop being this way, but I can't," I wrote, my normally-neat handwriting reduced to a shaky chicken scratch as I struggled to control the trembling of my hands. "I hope you still love me." With my heart pounding violently in my chest, I signed the letter and left it in the kitchen for them to find before locking myself in my room and pretending to go to sleep so I wouldn't have to deal with their initial response.

By some amazing twist of fate, my parents did not have the horrible reaction I'd been dreading for the past two years. They knocked on my door a few minutes after I'd left the letter for them, and when I nervously let them in, they hugged me and told me that they loved me no matter what; my dad even said, "Kid, you couldn't have picked a better family to be gay in." For the first time in years, I felt like I could breathe again. My fear of rejection was still there—after all, I still had to come out to most of my friends and extended family—but it seemed so much more manageable knowing I had my parents on my side.

It took me several years to fully come out and get to a point where I felt comfortable in my own identity. A lot of people, even those who had known and loved me since I was a baby, told me that they couldn't be friends with me or my family anymore because of my "sinful lifestyle." As painful as it was each time I was shunned by someone I thought was my friend, I eventually gained enough confidence in myself and my identity to stop caring as much when people tried to tear me down for something I know is outside of my control.

Now, as a fully out-of-the-closet queer person, I still face discrimination from certain people in my life and from society as a whole. However, I've learned that it's a lot easier to deal with judgement from external forces when you surround yourself with people who love and support you, and most importantly, when you have love for yourself, which I'm glad to say I now do. Even

though it was terrifying at first, I'm glad I broke the promise I made to myself in that backstage bathroom, because no matter what struggles I might face, at least I know I'm able to be open about who I am.

Teacher Takeaways

"This essay begins in compelling fashion, in a dramatic, vividly descriptive scene that proves central to the narrative. The use of dialogue is also strong here, especially in the letter the narrator writes to their parents and the father's response to that letter. The author also experiments with narrative sequence. It's a good move, but it does introduce some chronological confusion, making it difficult to place events on a timeline in relation to one another. This is a challenge with non-traditional narrative sequencing, but it can be resolved with strategic editing."

– Professor Dunham

Before I got sober I never paid attention to my dreams. I don't even remember if I had dreams. In the end I was spiritually broken, hopeless, scared and desperate. My life was dedicated to blotting out my miserable existence using copious amounts of booze and drugs. The substances stopped working. Every night was intoxicated tear soaked erratic fits of despair until I passed out. Only to wake up the next morning and begin the vicious cycle all over. Bending and writhing my way out of a five year heroin and alcohol addiction was just as scary. I was in jail. I had no idea how to live. I had no purpose in life. Then the dreams came back. Some of them were terrifying. Some dreams had inspiration. There is one dream I will never forget.

I am standing in a room full of people. They are all sitting looking up at me. I am holding a hand drum. My hands are shaking and I am extremely nervous. An old woman enters the room and walks up to me. The old woman is about half my height. She is barefoot and wearing a long green wool dress. She is holding a walking stick and is draped in animal furs. She has long flowing hair that falls over the animal furs. The old woman looks at all the people in the room. Then she looks at me and says, "It's okay, they are waiting, sing." My heart is racing. I strike the hand drum with all my courage. I feel the heartbeat of the drum. It's my heartbeat. I begin to sing, honoring the four directions. After each verse I pause and the old woman pushes me forward "It's okay," she says, "Sing." I am singing louder now. The third verse is powerful. I am striking the drum with all my strength. Many people singing with me. My spirit is strong. During the fourth verse sparks are flying from the contact between the beater stick and my drum. I am striking the drum with all our strength. We are all singing together. The room is shaking with spirit. The old woman looks over at me and smiles.

I woke up. My heart was racing. I took a deep breath of recirculated air. I could taste the institution. I looked over and saw my cellmate sleeping. I remembered where I was. I knew what I had to do. I had to get sober and stay sober. I had to find my spirit. I had to sing.

At six months of sobriety I was out in the real world. I was living on the Oregon Coast and I was attending local AA meetings. I was still lost but had the dream about singing with the drum in the back of my mind. One day an oldtimer walked into the meeting and sat down. He introduced himself, "My name is Gary, and I am an alcoholic from Colorado." We all respond, "Welcome Gary." Gary intrigued me. He was wearing old jeans, a sweatshirt and a faded old native pride hat with an eagle feather embroider on the front. Beneath the hat he wore round eyeglasses which sat on top of his large nose, below his nose was a bushy mustache. He resembled an Indian version of Groucho Marx. Something felt familiar about his spirit. After the meeting Gary walked up and introduced himself to me. I invited him to our native recovery circle we have on Wednesday nights.

Gary came to our circle that Wednesday. We made plans to hang out after the meeting. Gary is Oglala Lakota. He is a pipe carrier for the people. We decide to hold a pipe ceremony in order to establish connectedness and unite with one heart and mind. To pray and get to know each other. We went down to the beach and lit a fire. It was a clear, warm night. The stars were bright. The fire was crackling and the shadows of the flames were bouncing of the clear night sky. I took my shoes off and felt the cool soft sand beneath my feet and between my toes. The ocean was rumbling in the distance. Gary started digging around in his bag. The

firelight bounced off his glasses giving a twinkle in his eye as he gave me a little smile. He pulled out a hand drum. My heart stopped. He began to sing a song. I knew that song. He was honoring the four directions. My eyes began to water and a wave of emotion flooded over me. I looked up to the stars with gratitude. I asked Gary if he would teach me and he shrugged.

I began to hang around Gary a lot. I would just listen. He let me practice with his drum. He would talk and I would listen. Sometimes he would sing and I would sing along. We continued to go to our native recovery circle. It was growing in attendance. Gary would open the meeting by honoring the four directions with the song and we would smudge down. I would listen and sometimes sing along.

I had a year of sobriety when I got my first drum making supplies. I called Gary and he came over to help me make it. Gary showed me how to prep the hide. How to stretch the hide over the wooden hoop and how to lace it up in the back. I began to find purpose in the simple act of learning how to create stuff. I brought my drum to our native recovery circle. Around forty people attend our circle now. Many of them young and new still struggling with addiction. We lit the sage to open the meeting. The smoke began to rise into the sky. I inhaled the smoky scent deep and could feel the serenity and cleansing property of the sage medicine. I looked around at all the people. They were all looking at me and waiting. Then I looked at Gary. Gary smiled and said, “It’s okay, they are all waiting, sing.”

We now have another recovery circle here in Portland on Friday nights. Gary is gone. He had to move to Nashville, Tennessee. Many people come to our circle to find healing from drug and alcohol abuse. We light the sage and smudge down while I honor the four directions with the same song. I carry many of the traditional prayer songs today. Most of them given to me by Gary.

At one meeting a young man struggling with alcoholism approaches me and tells me he needs to sing and wants to learn the songs. The next week we open the meeting and light the sage. The young man is standing next to me holding his own drum. His own heartbeat. He looks at all the people. They are all looking at him. He looks at me. I smile and say, “It’s okay, they are waiting, sing.”

Teacher Takeaways

“I love this essay. It’s clear that the student is personally invested in the subject matter—that they’ve chosen something that is important to their identity and worldview—and they use repetition to highlight the experience of learning and growing. If this author planned to revise further, I would encourage them to experiment with sentence structure: the author uses what we call ‘simple sentences’ predominantly, which leads to a rhythmic but sometimes monotonous cadence. For instance, instead of ‘Gary is gone. He had to move to Nashville, Tennessee,’ the student could try ‘Because he had to move to Nashville, Tennessee, Gary is gone now.’ (Neither sentence is inherently better, but variety in sentence structure keeps the reader more engaged.)”
– Professor Dawson

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.9: Reflecting on an Experience

4.9.1: Section Introduction- Reflecting on an Experience

4.9.2: Techniques

4.9.3: Activities

4.9.4: Model Texts by Student Authors

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4.9.1: Section Introduction- Reflecting on an Experience

Section Introduction- Reflecting on an Experience

One of my greatest pleasures as a writing instructor is learning about my students' life journeys through their storytelling. Because it is impossible for us to truly know anything beyond our own lived experience,[41] sharing our stories is the most powerful form of teaching. It allows us a chance to learn about others' lives and worldviews.

Often, our rhetorical purpose in storytelling is to entertain. Storytelling is a way to pass time, to make connections, and to share experiences. Just as often, though, stories are didactic: one of the rhetorical purposes (either overtly or covertly) is to teach. Since human learning often relies on experience, and relating an experience constitutes storytelling, narrative can be an indirect teaching opportunity. Articulating lessons drawn from an experience, though, requires **reflection**.

Reflection is a rhetorical gesture that helps you and your audience construct meaning from the story you've told. It demonstrates why your story matters, to you and to the audience more generally: how did the experience change you? What did it teach you? What relevance does it hold for your audience? Writers often consider reflection as a means of "looking back in order to look forward." This means that storytelling is not just a mode of preservation, nostalgia, or regret, but instead a mechanism for learning about ourselves and the world.

Chapter vocabulary

Vocabulary	Definition
reflection	a rhetorical gesture by which an author looks back, through the diegetic gap, to demonstrate knowledge or understanding gained from the subject on which they are reflecting. May also include consideration of the impact of that past subject on the author's future—"Looking back in order to look forward."
diegetic gap	from "diegesis," the temporal distance between a first-person narrator narrating and the same person acting in the plot events. I.e., the space between author-as-author and author-ascharacter.

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4.9.2: Techniques

Techniques

"Looking back in order to look forward," [42]or

"I wish that I knew what I know now when I was younger" [43]

As you draft your narrative, keep in mind that your story or stories should allow you to draw some insight that has helped you or may help your reader in some way: reflection can help you relate a lesson, explore an important part of your identity, or process through a complicated set of memories. Your writing should equip both you and your audience with a perspective or knowledge that challenges, nuances, or shapes the way you and they interact with the world. This reflection need not be momentous or dramatic, but will deepen the impression of your narrative.

Reflection relies on what I call the **diegetic gap**. Diegesis is a term from the field of narratology referring to narration—the story as it is portrayed. In turn, this gap identifies that time has passed between the plot events and your act of writing. Simply put, the diegetic gap is the distance between you-the-author and you-the-character:

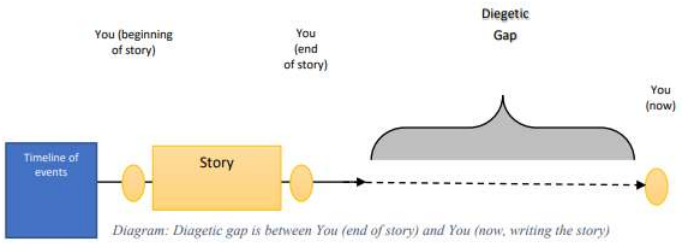


Diagram: Diagetic gap is between You (end of story) and You (now, writing the story)

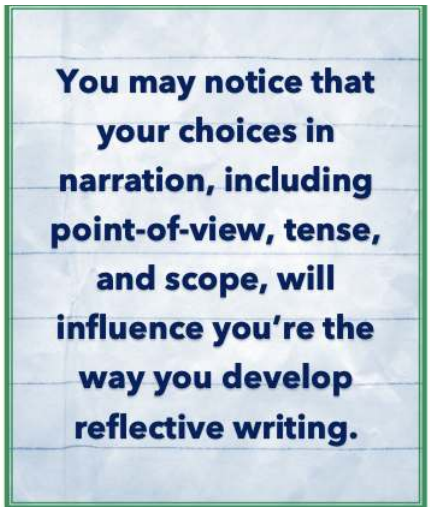
Because we are constantly becoming ourselves, shaped by our relationships and experiences, "you" are a different person at all three points. By looking back at your story, you can cultivate meaning in ways you could not during the events or immediately following them. Distance from an event changes the way we see previous events: time to process, combined with new experiences and knowledge, encourages us to interpret the past differently.

As you'll see in the upcoming activities , looking back through this gap is a gesture akin to the phrase "When I look back now, I realize that…"[44]

Wrap-up vs. Weave

Students often have a hard time integrating reflective writing throughout their narratives. In some cases, it is effective to use reflection to "wrap up" the story; it might not make sense to talk about a lesson learned before the story has played out. However, you should try to avoid the "tacked on" paragraph at the end of your story: if your reflective writing takes over at the end of the story, it should still feel like a part of the narrative rather than an afterthought. In other words, you should only reserve your reflective writing for the last paragraph or two if the story has naturally and fluidly brought us across the diegetic gap to present day.

Instead of a wrap-up, though, I often challenge my students to weave their reflection in with the story itself. You can see this at work in "Slowing Down" and "Parental Guidance" in some places. However, to see woven reflection applied even more deliberately, take a look at the model text "Blood & Chocolate Milk." This author explicitly weaves narration and reflection; while your weave doesn't need to be this obvious, consider how the author's choices in this essay enhance both the narrative and your understanding of their family dynamic.



Spelling it Out vs. Implying Meaning

Finally, you should be deliberate about how overt you should make your reflection. If you are trying to connect with your reader, sharing your story so they might better know you, the world you live in, or even themselves, you need to walk the fine line between subtlety and over-explanation. You need to be clear enough that your reader can generalize and relate. Consider the essay "Comatose Dreams" in the previous section: it does exceptional work with implication, but some readers have trouble knowing what they should take away from the story to apply to their own lives.

It is also possible, though, to be too explicit. Take, for example, Charles Perrault's 1697 publication of a classic folk story, "Little Red Riding Hood."[45] As with many fairy tales, this story is overtly didactic, stating the following moral after Little Red Riding Hood's demise:

Moral: Children, especially attractive, well bred young ladies, should never talk to strangers, for if they should do so, they may well provide dinner for a wolf. I say "wolf," but there are various kinds of wolves. There are also those who are charming, quiet, polite, unassuming, complacent, and sweet, who pursue young women at home and in the streets. And unfortunately, it is these gentle wolves who are the most dangerous ones of all.[46]

I encourage you to discuss the misogynist leanings of this moral with your class. For our purposes here, though, let's consider what Perrault's "wrap-up" does, rhetorically. With a target audience of, presumably, children, Perrault assumes that the moral needs to be spelled out. This paragraph does the "heavy lifting" of interpreting the story as an allegory; it explains what the reader is supposed to take away from the fairy tale so they don't have to figure it out on their own. On the other side of that coin, though, it limits interpretive possibilities. Perrault makes the intent of the story unambiguous, making it less likely that readers can synthesize their own meaning.

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4.10: Narrative Beginnings and Endings

Overview: Introductions & Conclusions

The introduction and conclusion of a narrative essay serve an important purpose: They provide a kind of framing for the body of the essay. That framing helps your audience better understand your writing. The introduction prepares your reader for the story that is to come in the body of your essay. The conclusion provides important reminders about key points from the body of your essay and offers you an opportunity to leave a lasting impression on your audience.

Introductions (How to Begin)

There is no doubt about it: the introduction is important for any kind of writing. Not only does a good introduction capture your reader's attention and make them want to read on, but it also puts the topic of your essay into context for the reader.

But just because the introduction comes at the beginning, it doesn't have to be written first. Many writers compose their introductions last, once they are sure of the main points of their essay and have had time to construct a thought-provoking beginning and a clear, cogent thesis statement.

Introduction Strategies

Although there is no one "right" way to write your introduction, some common introductory strategies work well. The strategies below are ones you should consider, especially when you are feeling stuck and having a hard time getting started.

Consider these strategies for capturing your readers' attention and for fleshing out your introduction:

- **Startling Statistic**: Find a statistic that illustrates the seriousness of the event or theme you will address.
- **Quote an Expert**: Introduce an expert's opinion related to your topic.
- **Common Misperception**: Mention a common misperception that your narrative will challenge.
- **Background Information**: Provide background information necessary for understanding the story.
- **Brief Narrative or Anecdote**: Use a short story that exemplifies your reason for choosing the topic. In an assignment that encourages personal reflection, you may draw on your own experiences.

In fleshing out your introduction, you will want to avoid some common pitfalls:

- Don't provide dictionary definitions, especially of words your audience already knows.
- Don't repeat the assignment specifications using the professor's wording.
- Don't give details and in-depth explanations that really belong in your body paragraphs. You can usually postpone background material to the body of the essay.

Take a look at the sample introduction techniques below. As you read, think about your own topic for your narrative essay, and mentally note how you might adapt one of these strategies to fit your story.

Writing in Action: Narrative Engaging Beginnings/Leads

Good writers sweat their engaging beginnings. Leads give shape to the piece and to the experience of writing it. A strong engaging beginning sets the tone for the piece, determines the content and direction of the piece, and establishes the voice. Of equal importance, the engaging beginning captures the reader's interest, inviting the reader to dive headfirst into the text. When you read, pay attention to how the writer engages you at the beginning of a story. When you write, experiment with multiple engaging beginnings. Deliberately craft different leads. During revision, choose the lead that you believe works best.

Typical/Unengaging (Avoid this!)

It was a day at the end of June. My mom, dad, brother, and I were at our camp on Rangeley Lake. We arrived the night before at 10:00, so it was dark when we got there and unpacked. We went straight to bed. The next morning, when I was eating breakfast, my dad started yelling for me from down at the dock at the top of his lungs. He said there was a car in the lake.

More Effective Strategies for Engaging the Reader:

Action: A Main Character Doing Something I gulped my milk, pushed away from the table, and bolted out of the kitchen, slamming the broken screen door behind me. I ran down to our dock as fast as my legs could carry me. My feet pounded on the old

wood, hurrying me toward my dad's voice. "Scott!" he bellowed again. "Coming, Dad!" I gasped. I couldn't see him yet—just the sails of the boats that had already put out into the lake for the day.

Dialogue: A Character or Characters Speaking "Scott! Get down here on the double!" Dad bellowed. His voice sounded far away. "Dad?" I hollered. "Where are you?" I squinted through the screen door but couldn't see him. "I'm down on the dock. MOVE IT. You're not going to believe this," he replied.

Reaction: A Character Thinking I couldn't imagine why my father was hollering for me at 7:00 in the morning. I thought fast about what I might have done to get him so riled. Had he found out about the way I talked to my mother the night before, when we got to camp and she asked me to help unpack the car? Did he discover the fishing reel I broke last week? Before I could consider a third possibility, Dad's voice shattered my thoughts. "Scott! Move it! You're not going to believe this!"

Onomatopoeia: A Sound Associated with an Action Squish thunk, squish thunk, went our boots as we trudged down the back road of the ranch. There had been a storm the night before and as my brother, sister, and I went for a walk, we were enjoying the crisp spring air and the sunshine putting its warming hands on our backs. As we approached the corral, we noticed a mud puddle, a particularly marvelous mud puddle where the rain had mixed with water, mud, and cow dung that had been there before the storm. Little did I know that I was about to be involved in the mud fight of a lifetime.

Shocking Statement: Something Surprising or Out of the Ordinary They say Maniac Magee was born in a dump. They say his stomach was a cereal box and his heart a sofa spring. They say he kept an eight-inch cockroach on a leash and that rats stood guard over him while he slept. They say if you knew he was coming and you sprinkled salt on the ground and he ran over it, within two or three blocks, he would be as slow as everybody else. They say… (from *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli)

List: Complex Listing of Just about Anything Peggy was a kind woman, a quiet woman, a librarian who lived on Oak Street with her loyal dog, Ginger. They ate together. They walked together. They read books together. They watched television together. Their life was perfect.

Lively Description: Specific Details Paint a Vivid Picture Scarcely a breath of wind disturbed the stillness of the day, and the long rows of cabbages were bright green in the sunlight. Large white clouds drifted slowly across the deep blue sky. Now and then they obscured the sun and caused a chill on the backs of the prisoners who had to work all day long in the cabbage field. (from "The Prisoner Who Wore Glasses" by Bessie Head)

Question: Something to Start Readers Thinking What's in a name? Nothing – and everything. It is after all, just a name, one tiny piece of the puzzle that makes up a person. However, when someone has a nickname like "Dumbo," a name can be the major force in shaping one's sense of self. That's how it was for me.

Scenario: An Imaginary Situation You've been drifting at sea for days with no food and no water. You have two companions. Suddenly, a half-empty bottle of water floats by. You fight over the bottle, ready to kill the others if you must in order to obtain that water. What has happened? What are you—human or animal? It is a question that H.G. Wells raises over and over in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. His answer? Like it or not, we're both.

Quotation: Quote Someone Whose Words Encapsulate Your Theme There are several choices for using a quote to engage the reader. One way is to begin with the quote and then tie the quote into the opening:
"The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor" ~ Aristotle
Aristotle and countless other masterful communicators have harnessed the power of metaphor to effectively persuade and inform. Metaphors allow you to make the complex simple and the controversial palatable. Conversely, metaphors allow you to create extraordinary meaning out of the seemingly mundane.

Another way is to embed the quote into your introduction:
Many of my high school friends are frustrated, and I understand that. I look around and see all kinds of problems in the world, and it doesn't seem like anything will ever change. When I feel like that, I think about Nelson Mandela's struggles, and I remember his claim that "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." For me, the next few years will be my chance to get an education, because I am going to change the world.

Anecdote: A Short, Interesting Story Related to Topic I'd been getting into a lot of trouble—failing classes, taking things that didn't belong to me. So the guidance counselor at school suggested that my parents take me to a psychiatrist. "You mean a shrink?" my mother replied, horrified. My father and I had the same reaction. After all, what good would it do to lie on a couch while some

“doctor” asked questions and took notes? So I went to my first session angry and skeptical. But after a few weeks, I realized that we had it all wrong. Those shrinks really know what they’re doing. And mine helped me turn my life around.

To Sum Up: Introductions

Overall, your focus in an introduction should be on orienting your reader. Keep in mind journalism’s five Ws: who, what, when, where, why, and add in how. If you answer these questions about your topic in the introduction, then your reader is going to be with you.

Of course, these are just some examples of how you might get your introduction started, but there should be more to your introduction. Once you have your readers’ attention, you want to provide context for your topic and begin to transition to your thesis, and don’t forget to include that thesis (usually at or near the end of your introduction).

Conclusions (How to End)

A satisfying conclusion allows your reader to finish your paper with a clear understanding of the points you made and possibly even a new perspective on the topic.

The basic functions of a conclusion paragraph are to:

- Restate the main idea of the paper (why you wrote this entire long piece to begin with).
- Summarize all the key points you made throughout the body of the paper (things that proved your thesis statement).
- Write about why this paper and topic are important, and leave the reader with ideas for additional research or maybe some questions that didn't get answered. The idea is that you want to leave the reader with a long-lasting impression. This is your opportunity to really drive your point home and to use some really interesting language.

Just restating your thesis isn’t enough. Ideally, you have just taken your reader through a strong, clear argument in which you have provided evidence for your perspective. You want to conclude by pointing out the importance or worthiness of your topic and argument. You could describe how the world would be different, or people’s lives changed if they ascribed to your perspective, plan, or idea.

You might also point out the limitations of the present understanding of your topic, suggest or recommend future action, study, or research that needs to be done.

How to Write a Narrative Essay Conclusion:

Writing a conclusion to a narrative essay (story) follows a slightly different format:

1. **Summarize the Main Events**: Summarize the main events of your story, reminding the reader of the journey you shared. For example, "Looking back, I can't help but think about how my journey from a small, unknown town to the bustling city was filled with unexpected twists and turns."
2. **Emphasize Personal Growth**: Emphasize the personal growth you experienced as a result of the events in your story. Share the lessons you learned or the insights you gained. This allows the reader to understand the significance of your narrative. For instance, "Along the way, I discovered inner strength I never knew I possessed and learned that embracing change is essential for personal growth."
3. **Connect to a Broader Theme**: Connect your personal experience to a broader theme or message that resonates with a larger purpose or universal truth. Transition smoothly to this broader perspective, showing the relevance of your story beyond your own life. For example, "My journey taught me the transformative power of stepping outside one's comfort zone and embracing the unknown, a lesson that applies not only to my own life but to anyone seeking personal fulfillment and growth."
4. **Leave a Lasting Impact**: Pose thought-provoking questions that encourage the reader to reflect on their own lives and consider how the message of your story relates to their experiences. This allows the narrative to extend its influence beyond the page. For instance, "How many opportunities have we missed by staying within the confines of familiarity? And how might our lives change if we dare to take that first courageous step toward the unknown?"

Sample Narrative Conclusions:

Here are three sample conclusion paragraphs for personal narrative essays:

1. Staring out the cramped basement window at the sprawling elite campus before us, I never imagined I'd soon walk confidently across its immaculate lawns. Mopping floors each morning so my family could afford community college seemed worlds away from Ivy League towers. Yet driven by my immigrant parents' sacrifices, I discovered the unbreakable connection between all who yearn to learn, regardless of privilege. My winding journey taught me barriers are only mental, not physical. Past this window lies not obstruction but opportunity - I need only reach out with courage to grasp it, as many grasp for the American Dream. Steeped in this vision, I boldly fling open the door and ascend into a future bound not by class, but the content of one's character.
2. Locked in tense negotiations, I suddenly realized that beyond contract details, real people's safety was at risk without our environment deal. Glancing down the cold conference table manned by suited corporate veterans, I caught the CEO's eye. In that pivotal moment of connection, I knew dollars could not eclipse humanity. Steeling my voice, I appealed to conscience and our shared hopes for clean air, framing sustainability as future-focused. I reclaimed narrative amid profit motives, uplifting meaning over margins and infusing business with community spirit. The CEO leaned back, a glimmer of awakening in his expression. With a tentative handshake, two worlds collided in understanding – proof one impassioned individual can redefine cultural realities. I had stood firmly for my beliefs, and they would uphold me still.
3. Pedaling the last mile uphill, lungs burning, I barely registered the sweeping mountain vista unfurling below, consumed with pushing my body to its absolute brink in this grueling race. Only cresting the peak, dirt coating clenched teeth, did the scene clarify before me – endless verdant valleys unfolding in awesome expanse, sky stretching to the horizon in vivid hues of orange and pink. Suddenly this solitary grind transformed into a shared triumph with the mountain itself, Connecticut's rolling forests, even the distant hikers cheering below. Though I commanded my legs those final yards over the finish triumphantly alone, hands thrown heavenward, I now knew myself part of something greater – that testing one's absolute limits taps into the spectrum of human potential itself, binding us in tired joy across time and terrain.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.11: Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative

4.11.1: Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative

4.11.2: Model Texts by Student Authors

4.11.3: Endnotes

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4.11.1: Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative

Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative

To synthesize what you've learned about description, narration, and reflection, you will write a personal narrative. This is generally a nonfiction, prose essay (similar to a memoir), but your instructor might provide additional guidelines in regard to genre, media, approach, or assessment standards.

Assignment

Your task is to identify an influential place, event, or person from your life experience about which you can tell a story. Then, you will write a narrative essay that relates that story and considers the impact it had on you, your worldview, and/or your life path. Using model texts in this book as exemplars, you will tell a story (narrate) using vivid description and draw out meaning and insight using *reflection*.

As you'll evaluate below, descriptive personal narratives have a variety of purposes. One important one is to share a story that stands in for a bigger idea. Do not be worried if you don't know the "bigger idea" yet, but be advised that your final draft will narrate a focused, specific moment that represents something about who you are, how you got here, what you believe, or what you strive to be.

Be sure to apply the concepts you learn in class to your writing.

Before you begin, consider your rhetorical situation:

Subject:	Occasion:
How will this influence the way you write?	How will this influence the way you write?
Audience:	Purpose:
How will this influence the way you write?	How will this influence the way you write?

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Each student will write an essay which **narrates** an event or series of events influential to their life path. The essay will incorporate ideas and techniques explored in Section 1, including the use of **description** and the rhetorical gesture of **reflection**. The essay will demonstrate thoughtful pre-writing, drafting, and revision based on feedback from the instructor, classmates, and/or the Writing Center.

Criteria	Instructor Comments	Score
Ideas, Focus, and Content *Is the author telling a story? Is the scope of that story effective? Does the author appeal to their rhetorical audience?*		/____
Structure *Has the author sequenced their story effectively? Does the organization enhance the writing? Does the piece 'flow?'*		/____
Style and Language *Is the author's voice authentic but rhetorically appropriate? Does the author use strong imagery and thick description?*		/____
Depth, Support, and Reflection *Does the author provide specific detail? Does the author reflect on the significance of the experience? Is that reflection genuine and integrated?*		/____
Mechanics *Does the essay read smoothly with minimal spelling/grammar/mechanical issues? Does it use proper format?*		/____
		/____ pts. possible

Before beginning the Peer Workshop and revision process, I recommend consulting the Revision Concepts and Strategies Appendix. In your Peer Workshop group (or based on your teacher's directions), establish a process for workshopping that will work for you. You may find the flowchart titled "Establishing Your Peer Workshop" useful.

Establishing Your Peer Workshop

To set the tone and expectations for your unique workshop group, talk through the following prompts. Record your answers on the companion sheet. Part One asks you to establish a climate or culture for your group; Part Two will help you talk through logistics.

(1) Culture of your Workshop

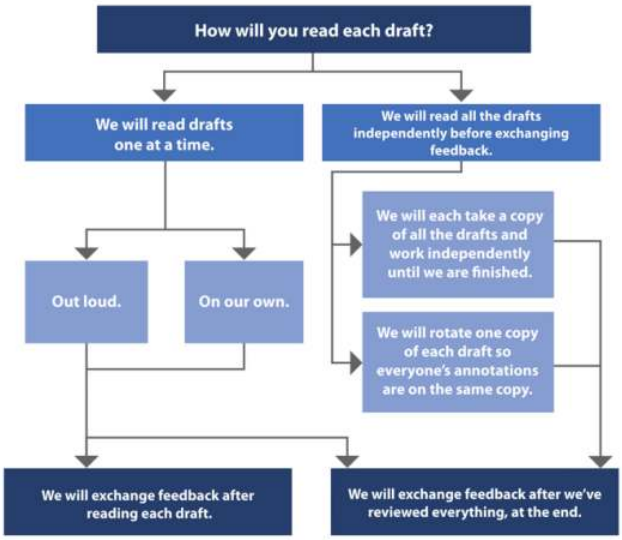
(a.) Choose the 3-5 descriptors of good feedback that are most important to the members of your group.

(b.) Discuss for 3-5 minutes: What do each of you need for this Peer Workshop to be effective?

FROM EACH OTHER? **FROM THE INSTRUCTOR?** **FROM YOURSELVES?** **FROM YOUR ENVIRONMENT?**

Record responses on a separate sheet of paper.

(2) Procedures for your Workshop



Establishing Peer Workshop Process:

Do you prefer written notes, or open discussion? Would you like to read all the drafts first, then discuss, or go one at a time? Should the author respond to feedback or just listen? What anxieties do you each have about sharing your writing? How will you provide feedback that is both critical and kind? How will you demonstrate respect for your peers?

One Example of a Peer Workshop Process

Before the workshop, each author should spend several minutes generating requests for support (#1 below). Identify specific elements you need help on. Here are a few examples:

I need suggestions for new imagery.

Do you think my reflective writing seems too "tacked on."

Do you have any ideas for a title?

I need help proofreading and polishing.

During the workshop, follow this sequence:

1. Student A introduces their draft, distributes copies, and makes requests for feedback.

What do you want help with, specifically?

2. Student A reads their draft aloud while students B and C annotate/take notes.

What do you notice as the draft is read aloud?

3. Whole group discusses the draft; student A takes notes. Use these prompts as a reference to generate and frame your feedback. Try to identify specific places in your classmates' essays where the writer is successful and where the writer needs support. Consider constructive, specific, and actionable feedback.

What is the author doing well? What could they do better?

- What requests does the author have for support? What feedback do you have on this issue, specifically?
- Identify one "golden line" from the essay under consideration—a phrase, sentence, or paragraph that resonates with you. What about this line is so striking?
- Consult either the rubric included above or an alternate rubric, if your instructor has provided one. Is the author on track to meet the expectations of the assignment? What does the author do well in each of the categories? What could they do better?
    - Ideas, Content, and Focus
    - Structure
    - Style and Language
    - Depth, Support, and Reflection
    - Mechanics
- What resonances do you see between this draft and others from your group? Between this draft and the exemplars you've read?

4. Repeat with students B and C.

After the workshop, try implementing some of the feedback your group provided while they're still nearby! For example, if Student B said your introduction needed more imagery, draft some new language and see if Student B likes the direction you're moving in. As you are comfortable, exchange contact information with your group so you can to continue the discussion outside of class.

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4.11.2: Model Texts by Student Authors

Model Texts by Student Authors

“You aren’t acting normal,” my dad said with a dopy, concerned look on his face. He was a hard-working, soft and loving man. He was smaller than my mother, physically and figuratively. She sat beside him. She had a towering stature, with strong, swimmers’ shoulders, but she was hunched often. She didn’t really have eyebrows, but she didn’t need them. She had no problem conveying emotion on her face, especially negative ones.

“What’s wrong?” my mother asked. She took my hand frantically. Not the way one might take someone’s hand to connect with or comfort them. She needed reassurance more than I did.

My parents were sitting across from me on cushioned, bland-colored chairs in my dad’s office, while I sat on a rickety, torturous wooden chair. My dad’s office generally utilized natural light due to the expansive glass windows that allowed the light to drown the room, enclosing us in the chamber. I felt like an inmate being prepped for lethal injection. The weather was particularly gray and dismal. Perhaps it was the ambiguous, gray, confusing feelings I was breathing through. My parents had somewhat regular “interventions” to address my somewhat regular (sometimes public) emotional breakdowns, my self-medicating habits, and my general shitty attitude.

This week in particular, I had purposely destroyed two of my mother’s collectible horses. She had a maniacal obsession for them. She also maniacally collected sunflower artwork, which was the one obsession, of many, I found endearing. My old babysitter noted at one point there were 74 collectible horses in the house. After my outburst, there were 72.

I could see behind my parents, through the glass-paned door, my two younger sisters were secretly observing the altercation from the dining room, hiding under the table. They were illuminated by the ominous weather, which was also watching in on the dismal conversation through the windows. I was envious, jealous even, of my spectating sisters. My sisters didn’t have overflowing, excessive emotions. They didn’t have emotions that were considered “excessive.” I felt like an offender being put at the stocks: my parents were the executioners, and my sisters were the jesters.

“I’m angry.”

“What about?” my dad asked, puzzled. “Did someone do something to you?”

“Honey, were you—” my mother looked to my dad, then concealed her mouth slightly with the other hand, “*raped*?”

I couldn’t help but raise my voice. “No, Mom, I wasn’t raped, Jesus.” I took a moment to grind on my teeth and imagine the bit I was chomping at. Calm, careful, composed, I responded. “I’m just angry. I don’t feel—”

“What don’t you feel?” She practically jumped on me, while yanking my imprisoned hand toward her. She yanked at my reins.

“I don’t feel understood!” My mind was bucking. I didn’t know why I needed to react by raising my voice. It felt instinctive, defensive. Shouting forcefully, I jerked my hand away from her, but it remained in her clutches. I didn’t feel satisfied saying it, though what I said was the truth.

“What are you talking about?” my dad asked mournfully. I knew he felt betrayed. But he didn’t understand. He didn’t know what it’s like for things to be too much. Or to be too much. My dad looked at me longingly, hoping I would correct what I had said. He looked lost, incapable of understanding why I was doing what I was doing. My mother interjected, cutting off my dad’s hypnotic, silent cry for connection.

“You’re crazy!” she said, maintaining eye contact. My mother then let go of my hand, flipped it back to me. She reclined in her chair, retracting from me and the discussion entirely. She crossed her legs, then her arms. She turned her head away, toward the glass windows, and (mentally) left.

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I was and am not “too much.”

I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder at 18 years old.

***

I had just stepped off a squealing MAX line onto a broken sidewalk slab, gnarled from tree roots, when I felt my phone buzz rhythmically.

“I need you to come to the hospital. Mom had a little accident.” My dad’s voice was distant and cracking, like a wavering radio signal, calling for help.

“What’s going on? Is she okay?” I asked while making my way to campus.

“Where are you?” He wasn’t going to tell me anything over the phone. Adrenaline set in. I let him know I was downtown and headed to campus, but that I would catch a Lyft to wherever they were. “We’re at Milwaukie Providence. How soon can you get here?

“I’ll let you know soon.” My assumption was that my parents had been in an argument, my mother left the house in a rage, and crashed her car. She’d been an erratic driver for as long as I could remember, and my parents had been arguing more than usual recently, as many new “empty-nesters” do. The lack of information provided by my dad, however, was unsettling. I don’t really recall the ride to the hospital. I do remember looking over the river while riding from the west to east side of town. I remember the menacing, dark clouds rolling in faster than the driver could transport me. I remember it was quick, but it was too much time spent without answers.

When I arrived at Providence, I jumped out of the sedan and galloped into the lobby of the emergency room like a race horse on its final lap. My younger sister and Dad were seated on cushioned, bland-colored chairs in the waiting room. There were expansive glass windows that allowed the light to drown the room. The weather was particularly gray and dismal. Perhaps it was the ambiguous, gray, confusing feelings I was breathing through. I sat down beside my dad, in a firmer-than-anticipated waiting room chair beside him. He took my hand frantically. He took it in the way one might take someone’s hand to connect with or comfort them. He needed reassurance more than I did.

“Where did she get in the accident?” I asked.

My sister, sitting across from me with her head in her knees, looked up at me with aquamarine, tear-filled eyes. She was staring through me, an unclouded window. “Mom tried to kill herself.”

“What?” My voice crescendoed from a normal volume to a shriek in the span of a single word. My mind felt like it was bucking. I grabbed at my hair, pulling it back tight with my spare hand. The tears and cries reared, no matter how hard I yanked my mane.

“We got in another argument this morning, and she sent me a message saying she didn’t want to be in pain anymore. She told me to tell you girls she’s sorry. I’m so sorry.” I’d never seen my dad cry before; I didn’t know he could. I didn’t know his tears would stream like gushing water from a broken dam. He looked lost, incapable of understanding why she was doing what she was doing. I looked from my dad to my sister to my hands. One hand remained enveloped by my dad’s gentle palm. At this point in life, I had not yet learned to be gentle with myself, or others. I cut off my dad’s hypnotic, silent cry for connection.

“She’s crazy!” I let go of my dad’s hand, flipped it back to him. I reclined in the chair, retracting from the situation entirely. I crossed my legs, then my arms. I turned my head away, toward the glass windows, and (mentally) left.

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“Crazy” is a term devised to dismiss people.

My mother was diagnosed with bipolar disorder at 50 years old.

Teacher Takeaways

“This essay makes excellent use of repetition as a narrative strategy. Throughout the essay, terms and phrases are repeated, generally with slight alterations, drawing the reader’s attention to the moment in question and recontextualizing the information being conveyed. This strategy is especially powerful when used to disclose the separate diagnoses of bipolar disorder, which is central to the narrative. I also appreciate the use of dialogue, though it mostly serves an expository function here. In itself that’s effective, but this narrative would be strengthened if that dialogue could serve to make some of the characters, especially the mother, more rounded.”

– Professor Dunham

“We can have you kicked out, you know.” Miss Nick (as everyone addressed her) began digging her fists into her hips. She towered over me at six-foot-something, gravity pulling her wire-framed glasses to the end of her nose.

I recounted the empty threats my mom would make.

“Ay nako nanlan! Putang ina! I’ll pull you out of that school! You want to go to Taft? Reseda?” Local public schools.

“Do it, you’ll save a ton of money,” I’d say.

“The only thing Catholic school is good for is producing my favorite unstable artists and writers,” I’d joke with my friends. They had been in the Catholic school system far longer than I had—fourteen years. I was jaded, though it was only my fourth year.

All-girls’ school was supposed to turn me around. But did my mother really expect the Northeastern elitism she hammered into me to fare well in Los Angeles? Especially surrounded by the daughters of television, radio and film legacies who lived in their hilly pseudo-ranches populated with their troupes of horses dancing around in golden Agouran fields? Homogenized whole milk.

Lodged right against the Santa Monica mountains was Louisville High School. The school was founded by the French sisters of Saint Louis, a French order founded by Abbé Louis Eugene Marie Bautain—whoever the hell that was. At the top of the rolling hills that were about as blonde as those who lived in them, was a small room that erupted with incense and the chatter of young women. These quarters belonged to this supposed gentle giant who chanted Mary Oliver poems ad nauseam. By her side was a new hire: an aspiring Christian songstress, also the daughter of an actor who had been typecast as a hundred high school bullies in the eighties. They, collectively, made up the “campus ministry.”

“Why didn’t you come to us first?” Miss Nick continued. “Why did you have to go straight online?” She had me there. I suppose it just ate at me. Maybe some sense of urgency. Maybe I was just playing their own game.

“Are you gonna cry?” The songstress almost demanded it. Her piercing blue gaze could only be summed up with lunacy. This was the first time I’d actually had any conversation with the religion department outside of class.

“No.”

peers, and empathize with each other. For a lot of the closeted non-religious and agnostics, this was the only time they could identify with their school and community.

Once, during lunch at a retreat, I hailed down one of the most respected instructors of our school. As a seven-foot bleeding wood crucifix looked on, we sipped the punch prepared by the sisters.

“Hey Mr. Clark, what was the name of that cult leader in sixties?” I asked. Amber punched me. We all giggled.

“You mean Jonestown?” He paused. His voice grew stern. “Now ladies— behave.”

Mr. Clark taught history and social sciences. He was the oldest member of the faculty and the most outspoken atheist of all. I’d spend hours in his room for detention, and we would have elusive conversations about Freud, Hunter S. Thompson, and his time in Boulder. The only way to enter campus ministry was through Mr. Clark’s room.

A week prior Olivia had applied to be a student leader for a retreat. Olivia kept to herself for the most part, and though we differed a lot, I always found something to discuss with her. Her last name came right before mine, so we often worked together on a number of assignments and projects. Mostly, we’d just critique our religion classes which emphasized chastity and accused select girls of being hussies. Olivia was a model student with perfect attendance. She was an artist, a writer, and more importantly, my friend.

Olivia’s application was readily denied in favor for the wealthy Catholic sweethearts and a select few who never disclosed certain information.

“I’d put on there that I was an atheist,” she shrugged. I knew for a fact the retreat leadership was ridden with heathens. There, on the sunny knoll, I flipped through the handbook and showed her a clause that prohibited the act of denying anyone for their race, religion or creed. And I knew save for everything, Olivia was overwhelmingly more qualified than anyone to lead a retreat. She was articulate, an active contributor to all things art and writing, and had come from years of struggle. She’d been living with Type I Diabetes her entire life, and her parents had just divorced. Her brother frequently got in trouble with the law, and she had managed to maintain perfect grades and demeanor for the past year. She actively contributed her art and writing in various forms, and was loved and championed by many teachers. If there’s anyone who deserves this position, it’s her, I thought.

I went home late after serving another detention. I opened my computer, lazed around, wondered for a moment. *It's our last year of high school. Fuck it.*

I typed in the search bar, "Petitions."

I spent a couple hours, which could have easily been spent completing all my assignments, formatting and outlining my 95 theses. I typed and typed with the fury and angst that coincided with the suffix of my age. I clicked submit and shared the URL for my peers to see—namely, my closest friend at the school, Amber, another artist who had recently painted a depiction of a dark-skinned Jesus. Amber naturally became fired up.

The next day, parades of teachers, parents, and students voiced their opinion to me.

"What you're doing is wonderful," uttered my art teacher. "I hope she gets the position." So far, the whole idea was met with so much positivity. Olivia would get her voice.

"Can I speak to you for a moment?" The math and earth science teacher stopped me in my tracks between classes. She, an advocate for the environment and reason, would surely shower the petition with nothing but affirmations.

"I'd put an end to this before it escalates. This is a Catholic school. This is a private school." I was blindsided. It was not until then I realized what I was doing could be considered wrong.

Endlessly, I cited the handbook. It was their constitution—their code of conduct. Often, I just nodded in confusion. I did not know what to reply. More and more teachers looked at me with disdain and discouraged me from continuing forth. No one would listen to the citation. Why couldn't anyone just admit that this clause was being broken? Opponents would only say that the campus ministry could conduct business as they wanted. It was their school.

Amber, vehement and by my side, became my spokesperson. She was the recipient of the arts scholarship. That, coupled with the death of her father years ago, granted her the honor of being selected as a senior lector. Students could not apply for this position—rather, they had to be nominated by a member of faculty. The thing was, Amber was a fervent atheist—more so than Olivia.

"She's a cunt," Amber protested, "she's a fucking cunt." I envied her absoluteness. It came so naturally to her. But I couldn't say the same.

From across the knolly pasture I saw my religion teacher, someone I found solace in. He had gone through seminary. He lapsed, and married a former student of our school. He found himself in some sweat lodge deep in New Mexico, where his Catholic faith had been lingering all along. Here, an adult teacher, admitted his agnosticism and his doubt. I admired it so. He had a liberal nature similar to my own: he talked of rogue Catholic sisters who were pro-choice and advocated for birth control.

"I understand your intention," he told me, "but I don't think you're seeing it in the right light. It's a perceived injustice. I'm not sure it really is one." My heart dropped.

I finally piped up after an hour-and-a-half into the harangue.

"So, you would have let her speak if she lied about her beliefs? That's all she had to do?" I could feel my voice rupturing.

Yes." Miss Nick replied. I silently stood up.

"Thank you." I left.

I took down the petition at the instruction of the principal.

"It was very brave what you did," she smirked, "but we can't have that on our record, you know how it is." She gave me a wink. I did not know what to make of that.

Olivia thanked me. She said it was the best thing anyone had ever done for her. As an act of compromise, the campus ministry let her say a prayer over the intercom system. People were moved. Silence reigned. Our art teacher, Mrs. Dupuy, cried. In a city of millions and a country of hundreds of millions, one girl in a small Catholic high school was viewed as threatening to the point of disrupting the entire framework. How could something so miniscule pose such a threat to our adult overseers? I never attacked their religion, but they were so adamant in attacking anyone's lack thereof. They preach "universality," but where? They lost all credibility with me.

After that, I became passive, stopped participating, and kept to myself. I often found myself cheek first against my desk in religion classes while Miss Nick ignited a pro-life/pro-choice debate that swept across the room. The songstress rallied for nigh fundamentalist practices that I'd never seen within a Catholic church. In the yearbook's senior superlatives, there's a picture of me under "Class Rebel," but it didn't mean anything. An embarrassment. No one seemed sincere after that. Selfinterest ruled everyone around me: the lenses I had on determined that everyone was doing and saying anything to further their personal convictions, regardless of how uninformed they were, or anyone who defied them.

Including myself. Especially myself. So, I shut up. *Everyone is self-serving*, I'd remind myself. I became cynical of everyone's intentions. I longed for authentic empathy. No, *unachievable*. I muted myself behind layers upon layers of verbal irony. No one could attack me if I followed my lines with nervous laugh, and *I don't know! Just kidding*! I prescribed myself large doses of Charlie Kaufman films, acid, and absurdist texts. At least Beckett and Camus see the gray.

"Now ladies," Mr. Clark said. "I know you don't agree with her, but she's had a rough life. Please try to understand where she came from." I don't think anyone there would have done the same.

Teacher Takeaways

"This author's use of dialogue is especially striking to me. Because the individual characters (and the way they speak) are each so vivid, I am more invested in the way the narrative plays out. I also appreciate this author's reflection; it's a good reminder that reflective writing doesn't haven't to sound like a self-help book or motivational speaker. On a global level, I would love to see this author apply their skill with dialogue to tell this story from multiple perspectives. What if Olivia was a first-person narrator in one section? What if we saw Miss Nick in her office alone after the confrontation?"

– Professor Dawson

Blood & Chocolate Milk[54]

The stick of gauze, the tinny primal taste of blood and the sweet creaminess of chocolate milk is what I remember. It was a spring day of my junior year in high school. It was the day I lost my wisdom teeth.

The night before my surgery Dad showed up and cooked us dinner. He made spaghetti, those meatballs he makes with the drop of plum sauce on the top, and a salad of spring greens topped with bright balsamic dressing and twirls of carrot. Then Mom, Dad and I watched a movie and Dad tucked me in for the first time in a long time. He slept on the couch.

***

It was strange that we were all together. My parents divorced before I could talk. I don't think about them as a pair. Other than birthdays and drop-offs they were never in the same place. They were always separate entities that I saw half a week at a time.

***

The next morning we woke bright and early. The dental assistant had told me to wear something comfortable but my cashmere cardigan and slippers did little to calm my nerves.

In the car on the way to the dental surgeon's office we made groggy early morning small talk. Mom was at the helm of our beat-up, dark blue minivan, La Fiesta. Dad sat in the passenger seat and I was behind them on the first bench seat wringing my hands.

The waiting room was sterile and white, it smelled of disinfectant and mint. Copies of various parenting magazines, Life and People scattered the low generic coffee table. More catching up. We asked dad how things were going with his new girlfriend, he was happy and we were happy for him. I fidgeted in the uncomfortable pastel green chair.

In the surgical consult they had said that the roots of my wisdom teeth were too close to the nerves in my lower jaw, it was possible that I could lose feeling in my lower lip. I was terrified of that possibility. I watched the hands on the clock tick away. I wanted to get it over with already.

A serious woman in scrubs finally appeared to lead me to the surgical room. I hugged dad and he stayed behind in the waiting room, Mom came with me. There were machines beeping and blinking. I handed Mom my sweater and shoes and she gave me a tight squeeze.

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Mom and I are a good team. It's always been us against the world. Dad has moved away twice but Mom has always been right here.

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As I laid down on the grey vinyl chair, the stale frigid air and my racing heart prompted tiny goose bumps to appear on my arms. Everything in that room was a dull pastel color or unnatural white. The pastels were unsettling — not the kind that reminded you of a sweet Easter morning but the kind that brought to mind dreary hospitals and desolate nursing homes. Mom held my hand, the tiny IV needle pricked into my vein and I was gone.

Hours later I was semiconscious with a mouth full of cotton and four less teeth. My parents got me to the car and dad sat in the back with me, letting my limp medicated body lean on his. Blood and drool seeped out of my numb lips and onto his ratty Patagonia jacket. He held me the whole way home.

***

Mom is my rock but I know she was glad to have a partner that day. She couldn't have carried me the way Dad did and she couldn't have seen me so broken without someone to assure her that I was going to be fine. Dad isn't always around but when he is, he gives all he can.

***

Mom and dad helped me wobble into bed and I floated away, my body heavy with anesthesia and Vicodin. I drifted in and out. The light came in my window, soft and pink like the creamy walls of my room.

My eyes opened slightly as I sensed movement in the room. "Hey Mai, how are you feeling?" Mom said, concern and sweetness heavy in her high voice. "It's time for some more medicine, does your mouth hurt?"

"A little bit," I said as best as I could with numb lips. The words came out muffled and strange. Gauze thick with blood and saliva was tucked over the wounds from the excavation. My mouth had become a foreign landscape with mountains of gauze and slippery rivers of blood. My tongue tried to ignore the upset. The blood was unnerving.

Dad reached into my mouth to deftly extract the blood soaked wads of gauze. Mom handed me the pills and dad held the bottle of chocolate milk, letting me sip it bit by bit to get the pills down. The milk was cool. Thick. Chalky. Chocolaty. A lazy breeze drifted in and Dad tucked fresh gauze over the wounds at the back of my mouth. They let me succumb to sleep again.

Hours or minutes later, Dad came into my room holding the Seattle Times. "Hey Sweetie, how are you feeling? I have some good articles to read to you," Dad said softly. He was wearing his jeans that didn't fit quite right and a ratty flannel. He sat down on the edge of my full-sized cloud, his back against the window sill, his legs outstretched horizontally and crossed at the ankle. His tall lanky body looked so out of place in my room but I was grateful to have him there.

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He didn't have to come. Maybe it was the medical nature of the event that made that more important in his mind than the school events or performances he'd missed. He could justify the trip and missing a night of work—to himself and his boss— because it was my body that needed hire, not my heart.

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I sat up a little bit. I was still groggy but aware. He read me an article about an ignorant hick couple that had gotten lost in the woods but survived to hilariously tell their lucky story. His performance was complete with different voices for each person. The

ridiculous accents made me laugh. He read me a few more articles. I savored his performance. He was going back to his city the next day and I was going to miss him.

Mom came in to check on me. She sat down next to dad on the edge of my bed. She touched my forehead, her hand was cool and steady. They looked at me with so much love, the pain was there but they lessened it. We were all under the same roof and on the same page, they were a team taking care of me, Mom handled the important things and dad handled the laughs.

Our journey has been hard but I know that they were always doing their best. They are both here for me in their own way. I grinned as much as I could; my puffy cheeks aching and straining against the gauze. My mouth felt broken but I felt whole. All I need is them, soft light, a warm breeze and chocolate milk.

Teacher Takeaways

"This essay caught my attention for a number of reasons. Primarily, I appreciate the content—this essay is about wisdom tooth surgery, but not really. The surgery is a way for the author to explore their family dynamic. Next, the imagery in this essay is vivid and appeals to a variety of senses. Finally, I really enjoy the structural choice this author has made: in order to weave reflection in with narration, they alternate each mode, indicating the shift with asterisks (***). This choice, I feel, is very effective. However, it also runs the risk of choppiness, as the abrupt changes might interrupt the 'flow' for some readers."

– Professor Dawson

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4.11.3: Endnotes

Endnotes

Complete citations for images are included at the end of the book.

[13] There is a school of writing based on this practice, termed остранение by Viktor Shklovsky, commonly translated into English as **defamiliarization**.

Shklovsky, Viktor. “Art as Technique.” 1925. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd edition, edited by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, Blackwell, 2004, pp. 12-15.

[14] Excerpt by an anonymous student author, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[15] Excerpt by an anonymous student author, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[16] Excerpt by Ross Reaume, Portland State University, 2014. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[17] The term “thick description” was coined by Gilbert Ryle and adopted into the field of anthropology by Clifford Geertz.

Ryle, Gilbert. *Collected Essays (1929-1968)*, vol. 2, Routledge, 2009, 479+.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, 1973.

[18] Excerpt by an anonymous student author, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[19] Excerpt by Noel Taylor, Portland State University, 2014. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[20] Excerpt by Chris Gaylord, Portland State University, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[21] This activity is courtesy of Mackenzie Myers.

[22] This activity was inspired by Susan Kirtley, William Thomas Van Camp, and Bruce Ballenger.

[23] This activity is a modified version of one by Daniel Hershel.

[24] Essay by Chris Chan, Portland State University, 2014. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[25] Essay by Kiley Yoakum, Portland Community College, 2016. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[26] Essay by Franklin, who has requested his last name not be included. Portland Community College, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[27] “The Big Bang.” *Doctor Who*, written by Steven Moffat, BBC, 2010.

[28] Of interest on this topic is the word *sonder*, defined at *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*: (n.) the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own—populated with their own ambitions, friends, routines, worries and inherited craziness—an epic story that continues invisibly around you like an anthill sprawling deep underground, with elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you’ll never know existed, in which you might appear only once, as an extra sipping coffee in the background, as a blur of traffic passing on the highway, as a lighted window at dusk.

Koening, John. “Sonder.” *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, 22 July 2012, http://www.dictionaryofobscuresorrows.com/post/23536922667/sonder.

[29] Gustav Freytag is credited with this particular model, often referred to as “Freytag’s pyramid.” Freytag studied the works of Shakespeare and a collection of Greek tragic plays to develop this model in *Die Technik des Dramas* (1863).

[30] For the sake of brevity, I have not included here a discussion of *focalization*, an important phenomenon to consider when studying point-of-view more in-depth.

[31] Sometimes *tone* and *mood* align, and you might describe them using similar adjectives—a joyous tone might create joy for the reader. However, they sometimes don’t align, depending largely on the rhetorical situation and the author’s approach to that situation. For instance, a story’s tone might be bitter, but the reader might find the narrator’s bitterness funny, offputting, or irritating. Often, tone and mood are in opposition to create irony: Jonathan Swift’s matter-of-fact tone in “A Modest Proposal” is satirical, producing a range of emotions for the audience, from revulsion to hilarity.

[32] Excerpt by an anonymous student author, 2016. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[33] Thanks to Alex Dannemiller for his contributions to this subsection.

[34] Tips on podcasting and audio engineering [transom.org]

Interactive web platform hosting [H5P.org]

Audio editing and engineering: NCH WavePad Audio Editing Software

Whiteboard video creation (paid, free trial): Video scribe

Infographic maker: Piktochart

Comic and graphic narrative software (free, paid upgrades): Pixton

[35] Vazquez, Robyn. Interview with Shane Abrams. 2 July 2017, Deep End Theater, Portland, OR.

[36] This activity is a modified version of one by Lily Harris.

[37] Thanks to Alex Dannemiller for his contributions to this subsection.

[38] Essay by Joey Butler, Portland Community College, 2016. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[39] Essay by an anonymous student author, 2016. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[40] Essay by an anonymous student author, 2014. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[41] To consider this phenomenon further, check out The Importance of Empathy (Youtube video)

[42] This is a phrase I picked up from Kelly Gallagher. Gallagher, Kelly. *Write Like This*, Stenhouse, 2011.

[43] Faces. "Ooh La La." Ooh La La, 1973.

[44] This activity is a modified version of one by Susan Kirtley.

[45] Admittedly, this story is a not the kind of narrative you will write if your teacher has assigned a descriptive personal narrative: it is fictional and in third person. For the purposes of studying reflection as a rhetorical gesture, though, "Little Red Riding Hood" does some of the same things that a personal narrative would: it uses a story to deliver a didactic message based on learning from experience.

[46] Perrault, Charles. "Little Red Riding Hood." 1697. *Making Literature Matter*, 4th edition, edited by John Schlib and John Clifford, Bedford, 2009, pp. 1573-1576.

[47] This exercise is loosely based on Gallagher, pp. 44-45.

[48] The quote reproduced below is from "My Scrubs." *Scrubs*, NBC Universal, 2007.

[49] Essay by Beth Harding, Portland State University, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[50] Essay by Katherine Morris, Portland State University, 2016. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[51] Essay by Derek Holt, Portland State University, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[52] Essay by an anonymous student author, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[53] Essay by Carlynn de Joya, Portland State University, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

[54] Essay by Maia Wiseman, Portland State University, 2014. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

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4.12: Supporting Storytelling with AI

Using AI to Revise Personal Narratives

Introduction

Revising a personal narrative is a crucial step in ensuring your story is well-organized, engaging, and impactful. AI tools like ChatGPT can provide valuable assistance in this process by helping you improve the organization, engagement, sensory details, dialogue, and overall sense of purpose in your writing. This section will explore practical ways to use AI for revising personal narratives, with clear examples and accessible explanations.

Improving Organization

A well-organized narrative is easy to follow and keeps the reader engaged. AI can help you assess and enhance the structure of your story.

Example: You have written a draft of your personal narrative but feel that the events are not presented in a logical order.

Prompt: "Can you help me reorganize my personal narrative to make it more coherent?"

AI Response:

1. **Introduction**: Start with a compelling hook that sets the scene and introduces the main theme.
    - *Example*: "The summer of 2010 was the hottest on record, and it was the summer that changed my life forever."
2. **Body Paragraph 1**: Introduce the main characters and the initial situation.
    - *Example*: "I had just turned sixteen, and my parents decided it was time for me to learn the value of hard work. They sent me to my uncle's farm for the summer."
3. **Body Paragraph 2**: Describe the rising action and build tension.
    - *Example*: "The days were long and exhausting, and I struggled to keep up with the demands of farm life. One particularly sweltering day, everything went wrong."
4. **Body Paragraph 3**: Reach the climax of your story.
    - *Example*: "As the sun set, I found myself alone in the field, overwhelmed and ready to give up. It was then that I discovered an unexpected source of strength."
5. **Conclusion**: Reflect on the events and their impact on your life.
    - *Example*: "Looking back, that summer taught me resilience and the importance of perseverance. It shaped who I am today."

Enhancing Engagement

To keep your readers hooked, your narrative needs to be engaging. AI can suggest ways to make your story more captivating.

Example: You want to make your narrative more engaging but aren't sure how to do it.

Prompt: "How can I make my personal narrative more engaging?"

AI Response:

1. **Add a Hook**: Start with a surprising or intriguing statement.
    - *Example*: "If someone had told me that a single summer would change my life forever, I would have laughed."
2. **Create Suspense**: Build suspense by hinting at challenges or conflicts to come.
    - *Example*: "Little did I know, the biggest challenge of my life was just around the corner."
3. **Use Vivid Descriptions**: Describe settings and characters vividly to draw readers into the story.
    - *Example*: "The farm was a sprawling expanse of golden fields, dotted with weathered barns and bustling with life."

Adding Sensory Details

Sensory details make your narrative more vivid and immersive. AI can help you identify places where you can add more sensory descriptions.

Example: You feel your narrative lacks sensory details and want to enhance it.

Prompt: "Can you help me add sensory details to my personal narrative?"

AI Response:

1. **Sight**: Describe what you see.
   - *Example*: "The sun blazed in the sky, casting a golden glow over the endless rows of corn."
2. **Sound**: Include sounds that enhance the scene.
   - *Example*: "The rhythmic hum of cicadas filled the air, accompanied by the distant mooing of cows."
3. **Smell**: Incorporate smells to bring the scene to life.
   - *Example*: "The earthy scent of freshly turned soil mingled with the sweet aroma of wildflowers."
4. **Touch**: Describe tactile sensations.
   - *Example*: "The rough bark of the old oak tree scratched against my skin as I climbed higher."
5. **Taste**: Use taste to add another layer of detail.
   - *Example*: "The tangy taste of sweat trickled down my face as I worked under the scorching sun."

Improving Dialogue

Dialogue can bring your characters to life and make your narrative more dynamic. AI can help you refine your dialogue to make it more natural and impactful.

Example: You want to improve the dialogue in your narrative to make it more realistic.

Prompt: "Can you help me revise the dialogue in my personal narrative to make it more natural?"

AI Response:

1. **Use Natural Language**: Ensure the dialogue sounds like real speech.
   - *Original*: "I am feeling quite overwhelmed with the tasks at hand."
   - *Revised*: "I'm really struggling with all this work."
2. **Show Character Emotions**: Use dialogue to convey emotions and personality.
   - *Original*: "I do not think I can handle this anymore."
   - *Revised*: "I can't do this anymore," I said, my voice trembling with frustration.
3. **Break Up Dialogue with Actions**: Add actions to make the dialogue more dynamic.
   - *Original*: "I am exhausted," I said. "I need a break."
   - *Revised*: "I am exhausted," I said, wiping the sweat from my brow. "I need a break."

Strengthening the Sense of Purpose

A strong sense of purpose gives your narrative direction and meaning. AI can help you clarify and emphasize the main message or theme of your story.

Example: You want to ensure that the purpose of your narrative is clear and impactful.

Prompt: "Can you help me strengthen the sense of purpose in my personal narrative?"

AI Response:

1. **Identify the Main Theme**: Clarify the central message or lesson of your story.
   - *Example*: "The main theme of my narrative is resilience and personal growth."
2. **Reflect on the Impact**: Reflect on how the events in your story affected you and what you learned.
   - *Example*: "That summer taught me that true strength comes from within, and it's often in our darkest moments that we discover our greatest resilience."
3. **Tie Everything Together**: Ensure that every part of your narrative supports the main theme.

- *Example*: "Throughout my story, from the initial struggles to the moment of realization, the theme of resilience is consistently highlighted."

Conclusion

Using AI tools like ChatGPT can significantly enhance the revision process of your personal narratives. By improving organization, engagement, sensory details, dialogue, and the sense of purpose, you can create a compelling and impactful story. Remember to personalize and refine AI suggestions to ensure that your narrative reflects your unique voice and experiences. With careful revision and thoughtful use of AI, you can elevate your personal narratives to a new level of excellence.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Exploring Our World- Expository Writing

5.1: Expository vs. Argumentative Writing
5.2: Effective Thesis Statements
5.3: Video- Thesis Explained
5.4: Definition Essay Overview
5.5: How to Write an Expository Definition Essay
5.6: Illustration/Example Approach
5.7: Cause and Effect Approach
5.8: Classification Approach
5.9: Process Analysis Approach
5.10: Student Sample- Definition-Expository Essay

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5.1: Expository vs. Argumentative Writing

Beginning with Expository Research Writing

Expository and **argumentative** writing represent two distinct approaches to composition, each serving a unique purpose in academic and professional communication. *Expository writing aims to inform, explain, or describe* a topic to the reader, presenting information clearly and objectively without attempting to sway the reader's opinion. Its primary goal is to enhance understanding through a neutral presentation of facts and concepts. *Argumentative writing, in contrast, seeks to convince the reader of a particular viewpoint or position*. It presents a claim or thesis and supports it with evidence and reasoning, aiming to persuade the audience to adopt the writer's perspective or take a specific action.

Mastering both expository and argumentative writing is a valuable skill that offers numerous benefits across various aspects of life. These writing styles help you convey ideas effectively in diverse contexts, from academic papers to professional reports. They also foster critical thinking by encouraging you to analyze information, synthesize ideas, and present them logically. In educational settings, proficiency in these writing modes often translates to academic success, as many assignments and standardized tests require students to demonstrate their ability to explain concepts clearly or argue a point convincingly. Moreover, in professional environments, the ability to present information clearly and make persuasive arguments is crucial for effective communication, problem-solving, and leadership.

For those new to research writing, beginning with a definition-based expository essay can serve as an excellent introduction to the process. This approach is particularly approachable for several reasons. First, definition essays typically follow a clear and straightforward structure, making them easier to plan and execute compared to more complex forms of writing. The topic is well-defined from the outset, which helps to narrow the scope of necessary research and prevents the writer from becoming overwhelmed by too broad a subject. Additionally, the objective stance required in expository writing is often easier to maintain than the more opinionated tone of argumentative essays, allowing novice writers to focus on presenting information accurately without the added challenge of crafting a persuasive argument.

Understanding Expository and Argumentative Writing

Expository writing informs or explains, presenting information objectively. Argumentative writing aims to persuade readers of a particular viewpoint. Both are essential in academic and professional settings.

The Value of Mastering These Writing Styles

These skills enhance communication, foster critical thinking, and are crucial for academic and professional success. They help convey ideas effectively in various contexts, from research papers to business proposals.

Starting with Definition-Based Expository Essays

For novice writers, beginning with definition-based essays offers a clear structure and focused research scope. This approach is less intimidating and helps develop fundamental writing skills.

Incorporating Various Expository Elements

Definition essays can include:

1. Cause and Effect: Exploring origins and implications
2. Illustration: Using examples to clarify ideas
3. Classification: Categorizing aspects of the term
4. Process Analysis: Explaining related steps or stages

This versatility allows for a comprehensive exploration of topics while practicing different techniques.

Building a Foundation for Advanced Writing

The skills developed through expository essays provide a solid base for tackling more complex argumentative writing later. Clear explanation becomes invaluable when constructing persuasive arguments.

Engaging Topics for Definition-Based Essays

1. Cryptocurrency: Explore its definition, types, and impact on modern finance.
2. Artificial Intelligence: Define AI, its categories, and its role in various industries.
3. Climate Change: Explain the term, its causes, and global effects.
4. Mindfulness: Define the concept, its practices, and benefits in daily life.
5. Social Media Influencer: Describe this modern profession, its types, and societal impact.

These topics offer rich opportunities for in-depth exploration, allowing writers to incorporate various expository elements while remaining engaging and relevant.

Takeaways: Beginning with definition-based expository essays provides a structured, approachable entry into academic writing. It allows for gradual skill development, preparing students for more advanced forms of writing in their academic and professional futures.

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5.2: Effective Thesis Statements

What is a Thesis Statement?

- A thesis statement tells a reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion. Such a statement is also called an “argument,” a “main idea,” or a “controlling idea.”
- A good thesis has two parts. It should tell what you plan to argue, and it should “telegraph” how you plan to argue—that is, what particular support for your claim is going where in your essay
- A standard place for your thesis is at the end of the introductory paragraph.
- A thesis is an interpretation of a subject, not the subject itself. The subject, or topic, of an essay might be World War II or Moby Dick; a thesis must then offer a way to understand the war or the novel that others might dispute.
- A strong thesis not only grabs the interest of your reader, who now wants to see you support your unique interpretation, it also provides a focus for your argument, one to which every part of your paper refers in the development of your position.
- A thesis keeps the writer centered on the matter at hand and reduces the risk of intellectual wandering. Likewise, a thesis provides the reader with a “road map,” clearly laying out the intellectual route ahead.
- A thesis statement avoids the first person (“I believe,” “In my opinion”).

A simple equation for what a thesis might look like this:

What you plan to argue + How you plan to argue it = Thesis
Specific Topic+ Attitude/Angle/Argument=Thesis

Steps To Write Effective Thesis Statement

- Choose a prompt or, if appropriate, select a topic: *television violence and children*
- Read the prompt carefully or, if appropriate, ask an interesting question:
  - ***What are the effects of television violence on children?***
- Revise the prompt or question into a preliminary or “working” thesis:
  - ***Violence on television increases aggressive behavior in children.***
- Avoid general phrasing and/or sweeping words such as “all” or “none” or “every”.
- Lead the reader toward the topic sentences (the subtopics needed to prove the thesis).
- Anticipate the counter-arguments. Once you have a working thesis, you should think about what might be said against it. This will help you to refine your thesis, and it will also make you think of the arguments that you’ll need to refute later on in your essay. (Every argument has a counter-argument. If yours doesn’t, then it’s not an argument—it may be a fact, or an opinion, but it is not an argument.)
  - ***Violence on television increases aggressive behavior in children.***
- This statement is **on its way** to being a thesis. However, it is too easy to imagine possible counter- arguments. For example, an observer of societal trends may believe that parenting or easy access to weapons are important factors in youth violence. If you *complicate* your thesis by anticipating the counter-argument, you’ll strengthen your argument, as shown in the sentence below.
  - ***While poor parenting and easy access to weapons may act as contributory factors, in fact when children are exposed to television violence they become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, are more fearful of the world around them, and are more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others.***

The Components of an Effective Thesis Statement

- You can’t just pluck a thesis out of thin air. Even if you have a terrific insight concerning a topic, it won’t be worth much unless you can logically and persuasively support it in the body of your essay. A thesis is the evolutionary result of a thinking process, not a miraculous creation. Formulating a thesis is not the first thing you do after reading an essay assignment.
- An effective thesis statement fulfills the following criteria
  - **Substantial**– Your thesis should be a claim for which it is easy to answer every reader’s question: “So what?”
  - **Supportable** – A thesis must be a claim that you can prove with the evidence at hand (e.g., evidence from your texts or from your research). Your claim should not be outlandish, nor should it be mere personal opinion or preference (e.g., “Frederick

Douglass is my favorite historical figure.") It tackles a subject that could be adequately covered in the format of the project assigned.

- **Precise** – It is focused and specific. A strong thesis proves a point without discussing everything. It clearly asserts your own conclusion based on evidence. Note: Be flexible. It is perfectly okay to change your thesis!
- **Arguable** – It should be contestable, proposing an arguable point with which people could reasonably disagree.
- **Relevant** – If you are responding to an assignment, the thesis should answer the question your teacher has posed. In order to stay focused, pay attention to the task words in the assignment: summarize, argue, compare/contrast, etc.
- **Aware of Counters**– It anticipates and refutes the counter-arguments.

The best thesis statement is a balance of specific details and concise language. Your goal is to articulate an argument in detail without burdening the reader with too much information.

Questions To Review Your Thesis

- "Do I answer the question?" This might seem obvious, but it's worth asking. No matter how intriguing or dazzling, a thesis that doesn't answer the question is not a good thesis!
- "Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?" If not, then you probably do not have a strong argument. Theses that are too vague often have this problem. If your thesis contains vague words like "good" or "successful," see if you could be more specific: why is something "good"; what makes something "successful"?
- Would anyone possible care about this thesis? So What? Does your thesis present a position or an interpretation worth pursuing? If a reader's first response is, "So what?" then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.
- "Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering?" Just as a thesis that doesn't answer the question ultimately fails, so does a thesis that isn't properly supported with evidence and reasoning.
- Does my thesis statement adequately address the direction words of the prompt: summarize, argue, compare/contrast, analyze, discuss, etc.?

Myths about Thesis Statements

- Every paper requires one. Assignments that ask you to write personal responses or to explore a subject don't want you to seem to pre-judge the issues. Essays of literary interpretation often want you to be aware of many effects rather than seeming to box yourself into one view of the text.
- A thesis statement must come at the end of the first paragraph. This is a natural position for a statement of focus, but it's not the only one. Some theses can be stated in the opening sentences of an essay; others need a paragraph or two of introduction; others can't be fully formulated until the end.
- A thesis statement must be one sentence in length, no matter how many clauses it contains. Clear writing is more important than rules like these. Use two or three sentences if you need them. A complex argument may require a whole tightly-knit paragraph to make its initial statement of position.
- You can't start writing an essay until you have a perfect thesis statement. It may be advisable to draft a hypothesis or tentative thesis statement near the start of a big project, but changing and refining a thesis is a main task of thinking your way through your ideas as you write a paper. And some essay projects need to explore the question in depth without being locked in before they can provide even a tentative answer.
- A thesis statement must give three points of support. It should indicate that the essay will explain and give evidence for its assertion, but points don't need to come in any specific number.

Progressively Complex Thesis Statements

Thesis Statement	Evaluation
The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some of which were the same and some different.	The worst thesis imaginable (other than non-existent). You've said nothing of value.
While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons while the South fought to preserve its own institutions.	A good pre-draft thesis. Not a bad start at all. Here's the catch, and the time consuming part of the process. As you write, your argument may become more refined or changed. When it does, so should the thesis.
While there were many underlying causes of the Civil War, three factors converged to make conflict inevitable: the issue of slavery, the idea of states' rights, and the fight to control the future of the West.	A solid preview of your argument and the main points you intend to make. This would be a strong approach for a persuasive or exemplification essay.
While both Northerners and Southerners believed they fought against tyranny and oppression, Northerners focused on the oppression of slaves while Southerners defended their own rights to property and self-government.	Bien! The thesis statement is nuanced, recognizing the existence of an opposing point of view, while strongly defending your point. It is relatively specific, yet concise—and doesn't make the reader want to stop reading.

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5.3: Video- Thesis Explained

The Thesis Statement

The definition thesis statement should not only provide the parameters of your proposed definition, but it should also establish why there is a need for establishing a shared understanding of your idea. 109

Example 11.2.111.2.1:

- While many people may believe that being educated requires formal schooling with degrees and certificates to prove achievement, being educated is also the result of learning independent of formal education: books read, journeys taken, and self-reflection.
- Although family once meant having two parents and siblings living in a house with a white picket fence, families today consist of myriad variations of this arrangement as long as love and support of one another are the critical boundaries.

Unlike other essay modes, the definition essay is organized around the devices that you choose to use to develop your extended definition. For example, a writer could use a process approach. In another approach, a writer could use illustration or narration to demonstrate the real life contexts where the word is used. Cause and effect could be used to clarify what happens when the word is understood in your terms and contexts; similarly, the causes that lead to misinterpretation could be considered and demonstrated. Finally, using a comparison/contrast approach is a common section of most definition essays; sometimes this approach is called negation—with the author emphasizing what the word clearly does *not* mean, when it does *not* apply.

Introduction

One strategy for starting a definition essay is to mention circulating and conflicting definitions for the word or concept to be clarified in the essay. Another possibility it to take a historical approach. How has the word or concept been viewed in the past? If the focus of your essay will be arguing for a new slang word, then use examples of other slang words have been introduced in previous generations. As a last resort, you can start with a short dictionary definition of the word, but this approach can be viewed as monotonous and boring to some audiences. Regardless of the approach that you choose, remember that it needs to lead to the thesis statement which is the clear assertion of how you want the word or concept to be understood.

Conclusion

To effectively write a conclusion for an extended definition essay, think about the impacts that adopting your established definition will have for the audience in situational contexts. Reiterate why your assertion is more apt that other perspectives, and be sure to summarize the distinguishing traits used to establish your definition as they were presented in the introduction.

The video lecture below lecture covers:
• Review of Expository Essays and Elements
• What a Thesis is
• Important parts of a Thesis
• Tips for writing a quality thesis

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5.4: Definition Essay Overview

A Guide to Crafting a Captivating Definition-Based Expository Essay

Overview

A definition essay goes beyond basic meanings to explore the deeper significance of words. This week, we'll learn how to write a compelling definition essay that engages readers and conveys meaningful insights. As you read the steps below, think about how they apply to your own writing.

The Definition Essay Writing Process

- **Choosing the Perfect Term:** Start by selecting a term that interests both you and your audience. Look for words with depth, multiple meanings, or abstract concepts like love, justice, or success. Choose a term that invites curiosity and deeper exploration.
- **Define with Precision:** In your introduction, provide a clear and precise definition of the term. Begin with a dictionary definition, then expand with your own understanding and research. Consider different contexts and perspectives to fully capture the term's essence.
- **Engage the Senses:** Use vivid imagery, descriptive language, and metaphors to make your essay lively and engaging. This approach helps create mental pictures and evokes emotions, making your essay more memorable.
- **Contextualize with Examples:** Use real-life examples, anecdotes, or case studies to illustrate your term's meaning. Concrete instances help readers connect with the term and understand its practical implications.
- **Explore Historical and Cultural Significance:** Look into the history and cultural context of your term. Discuss its origins, evolution, and how its meaning has changed over time. This adds depth and context, giving readers a broader understanding.
- **Challenge Assumptions:** Question common definitions and explore complexities and contradictions. This encourages critical thinking and invites readers to consider different perspectives on the term.
- **Empower with Personal Reflection:** Share your personal experiences and reflections related to the term. Explain how it has influenced your life or shaped your worldview, helping readers connect on a personal level.
- **Embrace Ambiguity:** Some terms have multiple meanings. Embrace this ambiguity and explore different interpretations. Highlight the richness of language and the varied meanings it can convey.
- **Conclude with Reflection and Call to Action:** Summarize the key points and reflect on the insights gained. Emphasize the importance of understanding the term and inspire readers with a call to action or a thought-provoking question.

Techniques for Writing a Your Definition Essay

When writing a definition essay, especially one that needs to be over 1000 words, it's crucial to use various techniques to provide a rich, nuanced understanding of the term. Here are some effective strategies:

1. Historical Definition: Trace the history of the term to show how its meaning has evolved over time. Explore its etymology and how it has been used in different contexts throughout history.

- Example: The term "democracy" originates from the Greek words "demos" (people) and "kratos" (power). Its meaning has evolved from ancient Greek practices to modern democratic systems worldwide.

2. Classification and Division: Break the term down into different parts or types to provide a detailed explanation. This helps in understanding the various dimensions or categories the term encompasses.

- Example: "Leadership" can be classified into different styles such as autocratic, democratic, transformational, and transactional leadership, each with distinct characteristics and impacts.

3. Comparison and Contrast: Compare and contrast the term with other related terms to highlight its unique features. This technique helps in clarifying what the term is and what it is not.

- Example: Compare "introversion" with "extroversion" to emphasize the distinct traits and behaviors associated with introverts versus extroverts.

4. Examples and Anecdotes: Use specific examples and personal anecdotes to illustrate the term in real-life scenarios. This makes the definition more relatable and concrete.

- Example: Define "resilience" by sharing a story of someone who overcame significant challenges, thereby demonstrating the qualities of resilience in action.

5. Negation: Explain what the term does not mean to help clarify its boundaries and eliminate potential misunderstandings.

- Example: Define "freedom" by stating what it is not, such as "Freedom is not an absence of responsibility," to emphasize the balance between liberty and duty.

6. Function and Purpose: Describe how the term functions or its purpose in a specific context. This approach is particularly useful for terms related to processes or roles.

- Example: Define "education" by explaining its purpose and function in society, such as fostering critical thinking, promoting personal growth, and preparing individuals for professional careers.

7. Analysis of Features: Break down the term into its key features or characteristics. This helps in providing a detailed and thorough understanding of the term.

- Example: Define "sustainability" by analyzing its core features such as environmental protection, economic viability, and social equity.

8. Use in Various Contexts: Discuss how the term is used in different contexts or fields to show its versatility and breadth.

- Example: The term "network" can be defined in the context of technology (computer networks), social science (social networks), and biology (neural networks).

9. Cause and Effect: Explore the causes and effects related to the term to provide a deeper understanding of its significance and impact.

- Example: Define "stress" by examining its causes (work pressure, personal issues) and effects (health problems, decreased productivity).

10. Personal Interpretation: Include your personal interpretation of the term, backed by your experiences and insights. This adds a unique perspective and depth to the definition.

- Example: Define "success" based on your personal experiences, values, and goals, highlighting how it can vary from person to person.

Using these techniques, you can create a meaningful definition essay that goes beyond a simple dictionary explanation and provides readers with a comprehensive understanding of the term.

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5.5: How to Write an Expository Definition Essay

A definition essay can be deceivingly difficult to write. This type of paper requires you to write a personal yet academic definition of one specific word. The definition must be thorough and lengthy. It is essential that you choose a word that will give you plenty to write about, and there are a few standard tactics you can use to elaborate on the term. Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind when writing a definition essay.

Part 1 of 3: Choosing the Right Word

1: Choose an abstract word with a complex meaning.[1]

A simple word that refers to a concrete word will not give you much to write about, but a complex word that refers to an abstract concept provides more material to explore.

- Typically, nouns that refer to a person, place, or thing are too simple for a definition essay. Nouns that refer to an idea work better, however, as do most adjectives.
- For example, the word “house” is fairly simple and an essay written around it may be dull. By switching to something slightly more abstract like “home,” however, you can play around with the definition more. A “home” is a concept, and there are many elements involved in the creation of a “home.” In comparison, a “house” is merely a structure.

2: Make sure that the word is disputable.

Aside from being complex, the word should also refer to something that can mean different things to different people.

- A definition essay is somewhat subjective by nature since it requires you to analyze and define a word from your own perspective. If the answer you come up with after analyzing a word is the same answer anyone else would come up with, your essay may appear to lack depth.

3: Choose a word you have some familiarity with.

Dictionary definitions can only tell you so much. Since you need to elaborate on the word you choose to define, you will need to have your own base of knowledge or experience with the concept you choose.

- For instance, if you have never heard the term “pedantic,” your understanding of the word will be limited. You can introduce yourself to the word for your essay, but without previous understanding of the concept, you will not know if the definition you describe is truly fitting.

4: Read the dictionary definition.

While you will not be relying completely on the dictionary definition for your essay, familiarizing yourself with the official definition will allow you to compare your own understanding of the concept with the simplest, most academic explanation of it.

- As an example, one definition of “friend” is “a person attached to another by feelings of affection or personal regard.”[2] Your own ideas or beliefs about what a “friend” really is likely include much more information, but this basic definition can present you with a good starting point in forming your own.

5: Research the word’s origins.

Look up your chosen word in the *Oxford English Dictionary* or in another etymology dictionary.[3]

- These sources can tell you the history behind a word, which can provide further insight on a general definition as well as information about how a word came to mean what it means today.

Part 2 of 3: Potential Elements of an Effective Definition

1: Write an analysis.[4]

Separate a word into various parts. Analyze and define each part in its own paragraph.

- You can separate “return” into “re-” and “turn.” The word “friendship” can be separated into “friend” and “ship.”
- In order to analyze each portion of a word, you will still need to use additional defining tactics like negation and classification.

- Note that this tactic only works for words that contain multiple parts. The word “love,” for instance, cannot be broken down any further. If defining “platonic love,” though, you could define both “platonic” and “love” separately within your essay.

2: Classify the term.

Specify what classes and parts of speech a word belongs to according to a standard dictionary definition.

- While this information is very basic and dry, it can provide helpful context about the way that a given word is used.

3: Compare an unfamiliar term to something familiar.

An unfamiliar or uncommon concept can be explained using concepts that are more accessible to the average person.

- Many people have never heard of the term “confrere,” for instance. One basic definition is “a fellow member of a profession, fraternity, etc.” As such, you could compare “confrere” with “colleague,” which is a similar yet more familiar concept.[5]

4: Provide traditional details about the term.

Explain any physical characteristics or traditional thoughts used to describe your term of choice.

- The term “home” is often visualized physically as a house or apartment. In more abstract terms, “home” is traditionally thought to be a warm, cozy, and safe environment. You can include all of these features in a definition essay on “home.”

5: Use examples to illustrate the meaning.

People often relate to stories and vivid images, so using a fitting story or image that relates to the term can be used in clarifying an abstract, formless concept.

- In a definition essay about “kindness,” for example, you could write about an act of kindness you recently witnessed. Someone who mows the lawn of an elderly neighbor is a valid example, just as someone who gave you an encouraging word when you were feeling down might be.

6: Use negation to explain what the term does not mean.

If a term is often misused or misunderstood, mentioning what it is not is an effective way to bring the concept into focus.

- A common example would be the term “courage.” The term is often associated with a lack of fear, but many will argue that “courage” is more accurately described as acting in spite of fear.

7: Provide background information.

This is when your research about the etymology of a word will come in handy. Explain where the term originated and how it came to mean what it currently means.

Part 3 of 3: Definition Essay Structure

1: Introduce the standard definition.

You need to clearly state what your word is along with its traditional or dictionary definition in your introductory paragraph.

- By opening with the dictionary definition of your term, you create context and a basic level of knowledge about the word. This will allow you to introduce and elaborate on your own definition.
- This is especially significant when the traditional definition of your term varies from your own definition in notable ways.

2: Define the term in your own words in your thesis.

Your actual thesis statement should define the term in your own words.

- Keep the definition in your thesis brief and basic. You will elaborate on it more in the body of your paper.
- Avoid using passive phrases involving the word “is” when defining your term. The phrases “is where” and “is when” are especially clunky.[6]
- Do not repeat part of the defined term in your definition.

3: Separate different parts of the definition into separate paragraphs.

Each tactic or method used to define your term should be explored in a separate paragraph.

- Note that you do not need to use all the possible methods of defining a term in your essay. You should use a variety of different methods in order to create a full, well-rounded picture of the term, but some tactics will work great with some terms but not with others.

4: Conclude with a summary of your main points.

Briefly summarize your main points around the start of your concluding paragraph.

- This summary does not need to be elaborate. Usually, looking at the topic sentence of each body paragraph is a good way to form a simple list of your main points.
- You can also draw the essay to a close by referring to phrases or images evoked in your introduction.

5: Mention how the definition has affected you, if desired.

If the term you define plays a part in your own life and experiences, your final concluding remarks are a good place to briefly mention the role it plays.

- Relate your experience with the term to the definition you created for it in your thesis. Avoid sharing experiences that relate to the term but contradict everything you wrote in your essay.

Sources and Citations

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5.6: Illustration/Example Approach

Learning Objectives

- This section will help you determine the purpose and structure of illustration/ example in writing.

The Purpose of Illustration in Writing

To illustrate means to show or demonstrate something clearly. An effective illustration essay, also known as an example essay, clearly demonstrates and supports a point through the use of evidence.

The controlling idea of an essay is called a thesis. A writer can use different types of evidence to support his or her thesis. Using scientific studies, experts in a particular field, statistics, historical events, current events, analogies, and personal anecdotes are all ways in which a writer can illustrate a thesis. Ultimately, you want the evidence to help the reader "see" your point, as one would see a good illustration in a magazine or on a website. The stronger your evidence is, the more clearly the reader will consider your point.

Using evidence effectively can be challenging, though. The evidence you choose will usually depend on your subject and who your reader is (your audience). When writing an illustration essay, keep in mind the following:

- Use evidence that is appropriate to your topic as well as appropriate for your audience.
- Assess how much evidence you need to adequately explain your point depending on the complexity of the subject and the knowledge of your audience regarding that subject.

For example, if you were writing about a new communication software and your audience was a group of English-major undergrads, you might want to use an analogy or a personal story to illustrate how the software worked. You might also choose to add a few more pieces of evidence to make sure the audience understands your point. However, if you were writing about the same subject and you audience members were information technology (IT) specialists, you would likely use more technical evidence because they would be familiar with the subject.

Keeping in mind your subject in relation to your audience will increase your chances of effectively illustrating your point.

The Structure of an Illustration Essay

The controlling idea, or thesis, belongs at the beginning of the essay. Evidence is then presented in the essay's body paragraphs to support the thesis. You can start supporting your main point with your strongest evidence first, or you can start with evidence of lesser importance and have the essay build to increasingly stronger evidence. This type of organization is called "order of importance."

Transition words are also helpful in ordering the presentation of evidence. Words like first, second, third, currently, next, and finally all help orient the reader and sequence evidence clearly. Because an illustration essay uses so many examples, it is also helpful to have a list of words and phrases to present each piece of evidence. Certain **transitional words and phrases** aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed here:

Phrases of Illustration

case in point	for example
for instance	in particular
in this case	one example/another example
specifically	to illustrate

Vary the phrases of illustration you use. Do not rely on just one. Variety in choice of words and phrasing is critical when trying to keep readers engaged in your writing and your ideas.

Writing an Illustration Essay

First, decide on a topic that you feel interested in writing about. Then create an interesting introduction to engage the reader. The main point, or thesis, should be stated at the end of the introduction.

Gather evidence that is appropriate to both your subject and your audience. You can order the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or from most important to least important. Be sure to fully explain all of your examples using strong, clear supporting details.

Example 5.6.1:

Letter to the City

By Scott McLean in *Writing for Success*

To: Lakeview Department of Transportation

From: A Concerned Citizen

The intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street is dangerous and demands immediate consideration for the installation of a controlling mechanism. I have lived in Lakeview my entire life, and during that time I have witnessed too many accidents and close calls at that intersection. I would like the Department of Transportation to answer this question: how many lives have to be lost on the corner of Central Avenue and Lake Street before a street light or stop sign is placed there?

Over the past twenty years, the population of Lakeview has increased dramatically. This population growth has put tremendous pressure on the city's roadways, especially Central Avenue and its intersecting streets. At the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street it is easy to see how serious this problem is. For example, when I try to cross Central Avenue as a pedestrian, I frequently wait over ten minutes for the cars to clear, and even then I must rush to the median. I will then have to continue to wait until I can finally run to the other side of the street. On one hand, even as a physically fit adult, I can run only with significant effort and care. Expecting a senior citizen or a child to cross this street, on the other hand, is extremely dangerous and irresponsible. Does the city have any plans to do anything about this?

Recent data show that the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street has been especially dangerous. According to the city's own statistics, three fatalities occurred at that intersection in the past year alone. Over the past five years, the intersection witnessed fourteen car accidents, five of which were fatal. These numbers officially qualify the intersection as the most fatal and dangerous in the entire state. It should go without saying that fatalities and accidents are not the clearest way of measuring the severity of this situation because for each accident that happens, countless other close calls never contribute to city data. I hope you will agree that these numbers alone are sufficient evidence that the intersection at Central Avenue and Lake Street is hazardous and demands immediate attention.

Nearly all accidents mentioned are caused by vehicles trying to cross Central Avenue while driving on Lake Street. I think the City of Lakeview should consider placing a traffic light there to control the traffic going both ways. While I do not have access to any resources or data that can show precisely how much a traffic light can improve the intersection, I think you will agree that a controlled busy intersection is much safer than an uncontrolled one. Therefore, at a minimum, the city must consider making the intersection a four-way stop.

Each day that goes by without attention to this issue is a lost opportunity to save lives and make the community a safer, more enjoyable place to live. Because the safety of citizens is the priority of every government, I can only expect that the Department of Transportation and the City of Lakeview will act on this matter immediately. For the safety and well-being of Lakeview citizens, please do not let bureaucracy or money impede this urgent project.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- An illustration essay clearly explains a main point using evidence.
- When choosing evidence, always gauge whether the evidence is appropriate for the subject as well as the audience.
- Organize the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or from most important to least important.
- Use time transitions to order evidence.
- Use phrases of illustration to call out examples.

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5.7: Cause and Effect Approach

This section will help you determine the purpose and structure of cause and effect in writing.

The Purpose of Cause and Effect in Writing

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

A cause is something that produces an event or condition; an effect is what results from an event or condition. The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena relate in terms of origins and results. Sometimes the connection between cause and effect is clear, but often determining the exact relationship between the two is very difficult. For example, the following effects of a cold may be easily identifiable: a sore throat, runny nose, and a cough. But determining the cause of the sickness can be far more difficult. A number of causes are possible, and to complicate matters, these possible causes could have combined to cause the sickness. That is, more than one cause may be responsible for any given effect. Therefore, cause-and-effect discussions are often complicated and frequently lead to debates and arguments.

Use the complex nature of cause and effect to your advantage. Often it is not necessary, or even possible, to find the exact cause of an event or to name the exact effect. So, when formulating a thesis, you can claim one of a number of causes or effects to be the primary, or main, cause or effect. As soon as you claim that one cause or one effect is more crucial than the others, you have developed a thesis.

The Structure of a Cause and Effect Essay

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

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

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

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

Regardless of which structure you choose, be sure to explain each element of the essay fully and completely. Explaining complex relationships requires the full use of evidence, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and anecdotes.

Because cause-and-effect essays determine how phenomena are linked, they make frequent use of certain words and phrases that denote such linkage. Certain **transitional words and phrases** aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed here:

Phrases of Causation

as a result	consequently
because	due to
hence	since
thus	therefore

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

Be careful of resorting to empty speculation. In writing, speculation amounts to unsubstantiated guessing. Writers are particularly prone to such trappings in cause-and-effect arguments due to the complex nature of finding links between phenomena. Be sure to have clear evidence to support the claims that you make.

Writing an Cause and Effect Essay

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

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

Use the phrases of causation when trying to forge connections between various events or conditions. This will help organize your ideas and orient the reader. End your essay with a conclusion that summarizes your main points and reinforces your thesis.

✔ Example 5.7.1:

Effects of Video Game Addiction

By Scott McLean

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Takeaways

- The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena are related.
- The thesis states what the writer sees as the main cause, main effect, or various causes and effects of a condition or event.
- The cause-and-effect essay can be organized in one of these two primary ways:
- Start with the cause and then talk about the effect.
- Start with the effect and then talk about the cause.
- Strong evidence is particularly important in the cause-and-effect essay due to the complexity of determining connections between phenomena.
- Phrases of causation are helpful in signaling links between various elements in the essay.

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5.8: Classification Approach

Learning Objectives

- Determine the purpose and structure of the classification essay.
- Understand how to write a classification essay.

The Purpose of Classification in Writing

The purpose of classification is to break down broad subjects into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts. We classify things in our daily lives all the time, often without even thinking about it. Cell phones, for example, have now become part of a broad category. They can be classified as feature phones, media phones, and smartphones.

Smaller categories, and the way in which these categories are created, help us make sense of the world. Keep both of these elements in mind when writing a classification essay.

Tip

Choose topics that you know well when writing classification essays. The more you know about a topic, the more you can break it into smaller, more interesting parts. Adding interest and insight will enhance your classification essays.

Exercise 5.8.1

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

1. The United States
2. Colleges and universities
3. Beverages
4. Fashion

The Structure of a Classification Essay

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

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

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

Each body paragraph of a classification essay is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subcategories. In the previous example, then, each region of New York would have its own paragraph.

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

Tip

To avoid settling for an overly simplistic classification, make sure you break down any given topic at least three different ways. This will help you think outside the box and perhaps even learn something entirely new about a subject.

? Exercise 5.8.2

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

Writing a Classification Essay

Start with an engaging opening that will adequately introduce the general topic that you will be dividing into smaller subcategories. Your thesis should come at the end of your introduction. It should include the topic, your subtopics, and the reason you are choosing to break down the topic in the way that you are. Use the following classification thesis equation:

topic + subtopics + rationale for the subtopics = thesis.

The organizing strategy of a classification essay is dictated by the initial topic and the subsequent subtopics. Each body paragraph is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subtopics. In a way, coming up with a strong topic pays double rewards in a classification essay. Not only do you have a good topic, but you also have a solid organizational structure within which to write.

Be sure you use strong details and explanations for each subcategory paragraph that help explain and support your thesis. Also, be sure to give examples to illustrate your points. Finally, write a conclusion that links all the subgroups together again. The conclusion should successfully wrap up your essay by connecting it to your topic initially discussed in the introduction. See Chapter 15 to read a sample classification essay.

? Exercise 5.8.3

Building on Exercise 1 and Exercise 2, write a five-paragraph classification essay about one of the four original topics. In your thesis, make sure to include the topic, subtopics, and rationale for your breakdown. And make sure that your essay is organized into paragraphs that each describes a subtopic.

Key Takeaways

- The purpose of classification is to break a subject into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts.
- Smaller subcategories help us make sense of the world, and the way in which these subcategories are created also helps us make sense of the world.
- A classification essay is organized by its subcategories.

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5.9: Process Analysis Approach

Learning Objectives

- Determine the purpose and structure of the process analysis essay.
- Understand how to write a process analysis essay.

The Purpose of Process Analysis in Writing

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

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

writing at work

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

Exercise 5.9.1

On a separate sheet of paper, make a bulleted list of all the steps that you feel would be required to clearly illustrate three of the following four processes:

1. Tying a shoelace
2. Parallel parking
3. Planning a successful first date
4. Being an effective communicator

The Structure of a Process Analysis Essay

The process analysis essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the goal of the process.

The organization of a process analysis essay typically follows chronological order. The steps of the process are conveyed in the order in which they usually occur. Body paragraphs will be constructed based on these steps. If a particular step is complicated and needs a lot of explaining, then it will likely take up a paragraph on its own. But if a series of simple steps is easier to understand, then the steps can be grouped into a single paragraph.

The time transition phrases covered in the Narration and Illustration sections are also helpful in organizing process analysis essays (see Table 10.1 “Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time” and Table 10.2 “Phrases of Illustration”). Words such as *first*, *second*, *third*, *next*, and *finally* are helpful cues to orient reader and organize the content of essay.

Tip

Always have someone else read your process analysis to make sure it makes sense. Once we get too close to a subject, it is difficult to determine how clearly an idea is coming across. Having a friend or coworker read it over will serve as a good way to troubleshoot any confusing spots.

? Exercise 5.9.2

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

Writing a Process Analysis Essay

Choose a topic that is interesting, is relatively complex, and can be explained in a series of steps. As with other rhetorical writing modes, choose a process that you know well so that you can more easily describe the finer details about each step in the process. Your thesis statement should come at the end of your introduction, and it should state the final outcome of the process you are describing.

Body paragraphs are composed of the steps in the process. Each step should be expressed using strong details and clear examples. Use time transition phrases to help organize steps in the process and to orient readers. The conclusion should thoroughly describe the result of the process described in the body paragraphs. See Chapter 15 to read an example of a process analysis essay.

? Exercise 5.9.3

Choose one of the expanded lists from Exercise 2. Construct a full process analysis essay from the work you have already done. That means adding an engaging introduction, a clear thesis, time transition phrases, body paragraphs, and a solid conclusion.

Key Takeaways

- A process analysis essay explains how to do something, how something works, or both.
- The process analysis essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the outcome of the process.
- The organization of a process analysis essay typically follows a chronological sequence.
- Time transition phrases are particularly helpful in process analysis essays to organize steps and orient reader.

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5.10: Student Sample- Definition-Expository Essay

Sample Essay 1: Definition of a Sister

Please Note: Evidence and matching citations are highlighted to help you learn the format. You don't need to do this in your essay.

Sisters are not just born, they are made through a unique bond that transcends blood relations. The concept of a sister holds significant meaning in many cultures and societies. Sisters are often seen as companions, confidantes, and lifelong friends. The term "sister" encompasses the aspects of kinship, support, and shared experiences, highlighting the deep bond and importance of this relationship.

A sister is a female sibling connected through shared biological parents or adopted into the same family ("sister"). Growing up with a sister means sharing childhood memories, experiencing similar family traditions and upbringing. For instance, my sister and I spent hours playing dress-up together, creating imaginary worlds and dreaming of adventures. We shared inside jokes, secret languages, and our own special rituals. These shared experiences solidified our bond, creating a deep connection that has lasted throughout our lives.

However, the significance of a sister extends beyond biological ties. Sisters provide emotional support, understanding, and companionship through life's joys and challenges. Lisa Adams, a renowned psychologist, explains in her article "The Power of Sisterhood: Building Strong Bonds and Emotional Connections" that sisters often serve as confidantes, offering a safe space for sharing thoughts, concerns, and aspirations. They provide a listening ear, lend a helping hand, and offer comfort during difficult times. The emotional support provided by sisters plays a vital role in the well-being and happiness of individuals (Adams). I have always come to my sister first with any news- joyful or devastating- because I knew I could trust her to listen, be supportive, and offer wise advice.

Moreover, sisters share unique experiences and create lasting memories, forging a lifelong friendship. As sisters grow up together, they navigate childhood, adolescence, and adulthood side by side. The shared journey fosters a deep understanding and connection. Adventures, milestones, and challenges become shared stories that form the fabric of their bond. Jane Johnson, a sociologist, explores the significance of shared experiences in her article "Sisters: A Journey of Shared Memories and Lifelong Friendship." Johnson emphasizes how inside jokes, secret languages, and cherished traditions are woven into the tapestry of sisterhood. These shared experiences create a treasure trove of memories that sisters can revisit and reminisce about, even as they age (Johnson). My sister and I faced the trials and tribulations of adolescence together, supporting each other through teenage angst and heartbreak. Our shared experiences shaped who we are today and laid the foundation for a lifelong friendship.

While it is true that not all sibling relationships are close, many sisters develop strong bonds based on shared experiences, support, and understanding. Even when sisters have arguments or disagreements, most are able to overcome differences because their relationships are more important. My sister and I have faced numerous challenges together, and while we did have disagreements when we were younger, we have become each other's biggest cheerleaders and greatest sources of strength over the years.

In conclusion, sisters are not just family; they are companions who share a deep bond. The term "sister" encompasses the aspects of kinship, support, and shared experiences. Growing up with a sister means sharing a unique connection and forging a lifelong friendship. Sisters provide emotional support, understanding, and companionship. They are there for each other through the ups and downs of life, creating a strong foundation of love and trust. Sisters truly hold a special place in our hearts and play an irreplaceable role in our lives.

Works Cited

(note: entries are in alphabetical order by first word)

Johnson, Jane. "Sisters: A Journey of Shared Memories". Psychology Today, 2018. Web. 14 May 2021

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Sample Essay 2: "Healthy Relationships"

The Foundations of Healthy Romantic Relationships

Love has been the muse for countless songs, books, and artworks throughout history, yet it remains one of life's greatest puzzles. Beyond its poetic charm, romantic love shapes relationships that deeply affect our happiness and overall life satisfaction. In our busy modern world, where online connections often take center stage, understanding what makes a romantic relationship truly healthy is more important than ever.

People have always sought companionship, with evidence of couples forming bonds dating back to ancient times. As human societies grew and changed, so did our ideas about romantic relationships, influenced by cultural traditions, social expectations, and personal desires. In recent years, the landscape of romance has shifted dramatically, thanks to changing gender roles, people living longer, and the rise of online dating.

Despite all these changes, our basic need for deep, meaningful connections remains the same. Research in psychology consistently shows that people in healthy, supportive relationships tend to be happier, healthier, and better able to handle life's challenges. However, creating and maintaining such relationships isn't always straightforward or easy.

At its heart, a healthy romantic relationship is built on several key elements that work together to create a strong, lasting bond between partners. These include good communication, trust and respect, emotional and physical closeness, and supporting each other's personal growth. By looking closely at these fundamental aspects, we can better understand what makes successful partnerships tick and learn how to build more fulfilling romantic relationships in our own lives.

Good communication is the cornerstone of healthy romantic relationships. It's how partners share their thoughts, feelings, and needs with each other. Dr. John Gottman, a well-known relationship expert, points out in his book "The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work" that "Happy couples, I found, communicate differently from those who eventually split up or live together unhappily" (3). This difference shows up in how well partners can talk openly and honestly while still being respectful and understanding of each other. Good communication isn't just about talking; it's also about listening carefully to understand your partner's point of view without judging them. It also includes being able to handle disagreements in a positive way, looking for solutions together rather than trying to win arguments. When couples prioritize clear and kind communication, they build a foundation of understanding that strengthens their bond and helps them face challenges as a team.

Trust and respect are the bedrock of healthy romantic relationships, creating a safe space where both partners feel valued and secure. Trust means believing in your partner's honesty, reliability, and commitment to the relationship. It grows over time through consistent actions that show dependability and integrity. Respect goes hand in hand with trust and means truly valuing your partner's thoughts, feelings, and individuality. Dr. Sue Johnson, who developed a type of couples therapy, emphasizes how important it is to respond to each other's emotional needs in building trust. In her book "Hold Me Tight," she explains, "When we feel generally secure, that our partners will respond to us when we need them, we can maintain a sense of emotional balance" (32). This security allows people to be their true selves in the relationship, leading to a deeper connection. When trust and respect are strong, partners feel free to express themselves fully and face life's ups and downs together, making their relationship stronger and more likely to last.

Emotional and physical closeness play important roles in nurturing the connection between partners in healthy romantic relationships. Emotional closeness involves sharing your deepest thoughts, feelings, and experiences, creating a strong sense of connection and understanding. Physical closeness, which includes both sexual and non-sexual forms of affection, offers a unique way to express love, desire, and connection. Dr. Emily Nagoski, a sex educator and author of "Come As You Are," highlights the importance of understanding and respecting each other's needs and boundaries in building intimacy. She notes, "Context is everything when it comes to sex and desire. What matters most is not the individual pieces but how they fit together" (56). This view shows how emotional and physical closeness are interconnected and emphasizes the need for open communication about desires and comfort levels. Couples who prioritize both types of closeness, balancing shared vulnerability with respect for individual boundaries, often experience a deeper sense of connection and satisfaction in their relationship.

Supporting each other's personal growth is a vital part of healthy romantic relationships, creating an environment where both partners can thrive individually and as a couple. This means actively encouraging each other's goals, celebrating successes, and providing comfort during tough times. Dr. Gary Chapman, author of "The 5 Love Languages," emphasizes the importance of

understanding and meeting each other's emotional needs, stating, "Love is something you do for someone else, not something you do for yourself" (13). This perspective highlights how healthy relationships involve give and take, with both partners committed to each other's well-being and happiness. Supporting personal growth goes beyond just offering words of encouragement. It includes adapting to changes, offering helpful feedback, and growing together as individuals and as a couple. By fostering an atmosphere of growth and support, partners create a dynamic relationship that can stand the test of time and continue to flourish as life changes.

These key elements - good communication, trust and respect, emotional and physical closeness, and supporting each other's growth - work together to create a healthy, thriving romantic relationship. Each element strengthens the others, forming a strong foundation that can withstand the inevitable challenges that come up in any long-term partnership. While no relationship is perfect, couples who actively work on these fundamental aspects are better equipped to handle difficulties and maintain a strong, satisfying partnership. Understanding and putting these principles into practice requires ongoing effort, commitment, and a willingness to learn and grow together. However, the rewards of a healthy romantic relationship - including greater happiness, better mental and physical health, and a deep sense of connection - make this investment in one's relationship incredibly worthwhile.

As many would agree, healthy romantic relationships don't just happen by chance or because two people are compatible. They're the result of intentional efforts to build and maintain strong connections. By focusing on good communication, building trust and respect, nurturing emotional and physical closeness, and supporting each other's personal growth, partners can create relationships that not only last but thrive. In doing so, they not only enhance their own lives but also contribute to the broader tapestry of human connection, showing the lasting power of love to enrich and elevate our lives.

Works Cited

Chapman, Gary. The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts. Northfield Publishing, 2015.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Finding, Understanding, and Using Outside Sources

6.1: Writing with Outside Evidence

6.2: Effectively Integrating Textual Evidence

6.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism

6.4: MLA Format

6.5: Formatting the Works Cited Page (MLA)

6.6: Citing Generative AI Content

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6.1: Writing with Outside Evidence

The Importance of Evidence in Expository Writing

In academic and professional writing, the strength of an argument often lies not in the claim itself, but in the evidence supporting it. Much like a well-constructed building requires a solid foundation and quality materials, a compelling expository essay needs robust evidence to stand up to scrutiny.

Consider how you approach decision-making in your daily life. When choosing a new laptop, you likely don't just pick the first one you see. Instead, you research specifications, read reviews, and compare prices. This process of gathering and evaluating information is essentially what we do when incorporating evidence into our writing.

In a more formal context, think of a researcher presenting findings to a panel of experts. They can't simply state their conclusions without backing them up. They need data from experiments, statistical analyses, and references to previous studies to support their claims. Similarly, when crafting an expository essay, you're presenting your understanding of a topic to your readers, and evidence is what validates your exposition.

But why is evidence so crucial in expository writing? Let's examine a few key reasons:

1. **Enhances Credibility**: Incorporating well-researched evidence demonstrates that your ideas are grounded in fact rather than mere conjecture. It's the difference between stating, "Climate change is a significant issue," and "According to NASA, global sea levels have risen by about 8 inches in the last century, with the rate in the last two decades nearly doubling that of the last century."
2. **Provides Clarity**: Evidence helps elucidate complex ideas. It bridges the gap between abstract concepts and concrete understanding, much like how a case study can illustrate a broader economic principle.
3. **Engages the Reader**: Well-chosen evidence can captivate your audience. An unexpected statistic or a poignant example can pique interest and encourage deeper engagement with your text.
4. **Strengthens Persuasion**: In argumentative writing, evidence is your primary tool for convincing the reader. It's significantly more challenging to dismiss an argument backed by credible sources and data.
5. **Promotes Critical Thinking**: The process of finding and evaluating evidence enhances your own understanding of the topic. This deeper comprehension often translates into more nuanced and insightful writing.

Using evidence in your writing isn't merely about fulfilling an academic requirement. It's about elevating the quality of discourse, respecting your readers' intellect, and contributing meaningfully to the subject at hand. It transforms your writing from a collection of personal opinions into a well-reasoned, informative piece of work.

As you progress in your academic and professional career, think of yourself as a researcher or analyst. Your task is to explain concepts, construct arguments, or solve problems – and evidence is your most valuable asset. When used effectively, it can transform your writing from speculative to authoritative, from vague to precise, and from forgettable to impactful.

Types of Evidence

1. Facts and Statistics

Definition: Facts are statements that can be proven true. Statistics are numerical data used to support a claim.

Examples:

- Fact: "Water freezes at 0 degrees Celsius."
- Statistic: "According to the World Health Organization, 17.9 million people die each year from cardiovascular diseases."

Why Use Them? Facts and statistics are compelling because they provide concrete, verifiable information that supports your argument. They are particularly useful in establishing the reality of a situation or the extent of a problem.

How to Use Them:

- **Source Credibility**: Always use facts and statistics from reliable, authoritative sources. This includes academic journals, reputable news organizations, and government reports.

- **Context**: Explain the relevance of the fact or statistic to your argument. Don’t assume that the evidence speaks for itself.

Example Paragraph: "Climate change poses a severe threat to global ecosystems. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global temperatures have risen by 1.2 degrees Celsius since the pre-industrial era. This rise in temperature has led to more frequent and severe weather events, such as hurricanes and droughts. By providing this statistic, the IPCC highlights the tangible impact of climate change on our environment. Therefore, it is imperative to address climate change through comprehensive environmental policies to mitigate these adverse effects."

2. Expert Testimony

Definition: Expert testimony includes quotations or summaries of statements from people who are recognized authorities in the field you are discussing.

Examples:

- "Dr. Jane Goodall, a leading primatologist, emphasizes that 'chimpanzees are more like us than we imagined.'"

Why Use It? Expert testimony adds credibility to your argument because it shows that knowledgeable and respected figures support your claims.

How to Use It:

- **Introduce the Expert**: Clearly introduce the expert, including their qualifications and relevance to your topic.
- **Explain the Testimony**: Don’t just drop in a quote; explain how it supports your point.

Example Paragraph: "The importance of mental health awareness in schools cannot be overstated. Dr. John Doe, a renowned psychologist, asserts that 'early intervention in mental health issues can significantly improve students' academic and social outcomes.' Dr. Doe's statement highlights the critical role of early mental health support in shaping a student's overall well-being. As such, schools should prioritize mental health programs to foster a supportive learning environment, ensuring that students receive the help they need at the earliest possible stage."

3. Examples and Illustrations

Definition: Specific instances or cases that demonstrate a broader point or concept.

Examples:

- "For instance, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch illustrates the vast scale of plastic pollution in our oceans."

Why Use Them? Examples and illustrations make abstract or complex ideas more concrete and relatable. They can help your readers visualize what you are discussing.

How to Use Them:

- **Relevance**: Choose examples that are directly relevant to your argument.
- **Detail**: Provide enough detail to make the example clear and understandable.

Example Paragraph: "Plastic pollution is a growing environmental concern that affects marine life worldwide. For instance, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch illustrates the vast scale of this problem. This massive accumulation of plastic debris spans thousands of miles in the Pacific Ocean and continues to grow. By presenting this concrete example, the extensive impact of human waste on marine ecosystems becomes evident. Such illustrations highlight the urgent need for global initiatives to reduce plastic waste and protect our oceans."

4. Definitions

Definition: Explanations of terms or concepts that are central to your essay.

Examples:

- "Resilience, as defined by the American Psychological Association, is 'the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.'"

Why Use Them? Definitions ensure that your readers understand key terms as you intend them. This is especially important for complex or contested terms.

How to Use Them:

- **Clarity**: Provide clear and concise definitions.
- **Authority**: Cite the source of your definition to lend credibility.

Example Paragraph: "Understanding resilience is essential when discussing mental health. Resilience, as defined by the American Psychological Association, is 'the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.' This definition underscores the dynamic nature of resilience, emphasizing not just the capacity to endure challenges but also to thrive despite them. By incorporating this definition, readers can better grasp the multifaceted nature of resilience and its significance in promoting mental well-being."

5. Anecdotes

Definition: Short, personal stories or accounts that illustrate a point.

Examples:

- "When I was in high school, I struggled with balancing homework and extracurricular activities, but learning to manage my time effectively made all the difference."

Why Use Them? Anecdotes make your writing more engaging and relatable. They can personalize abstract concepts and draw readers in.

How to Use Them:

- **Relevance**: Ensure that your anecdote directly supports your argument.
- **Brevity**: Keep anecdotes short and to the point.

Example Paragraph: "Developing strong time management skills is essential for academic success. During my freshman year of college, I struggled to balance coursework and extracurricular activities. By implementing a strict study schedule and prioritizing tasks, I was able to improve my grades and reduce stress. This personal experience demonstrates the effectiveness of time management strategies in achieving academic goals, highlighting the importance of discipline and organization for students."

Integrating Evidence Effectively

1. **Introduce the Evidence**
   - **Context**: Set the stage for the evidence you are about to present. Provide any necessary background information.
   - **Example**: "Recent research into adolescent behavior has shed light on the effects of social media use."
2. **Present the Evidence**
   - **Direct Quotation or Paraphrase**: Clearly present the evidence, whether you are quoting directly or paraphrasing.
   - **Example**: "According to a 2023 survey by the Pew Research Center, '95% of teens report using social media platforms.'"
3. **Explain the Evidence**
   - **Analysis**: Explain how the evidence supports your argument. Break down the information and link it to your thesis.
   - **Example**: "This statistic illustrates the pervasive role of social media in teenagers' lives, affecting their social interactions and self-esteem."
4. **Relate the Evidence to Your Argument**
   - **Link**: Explicitly connect the evidence back to your main argument or thesis. Make sure your readers understand why the evidence is relevant.
   - **Example**: "Understanding the impact of social media on teens is crucial for developing effective educational and mental health interventions."

Examples of Evidence Integration

1. Fact and Statistic Integration

- **Introduction**: "Climate change poses a severe threat to global ecosystems."
- **Evidence**: "According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global temperatures have risen by 1.2 degrees Celsius since the pre-industrial era."
- **Explanation**: "This rise in temperature has led to more frequent and severe weather events, such as hurricanes and droughts."
- **Link**: "Therefore, it is imperative to address climate change through comprehensive environmental policies."

2. Expert Testimony Integration

- **Introduction**: "The importance of mental health awareness in schools cannot be overstated."
- **Evidence**: "Dr. John Doe, a renowned psychologist, asserts that 'early intervention in mental health issues can significantly improve students' academic and social outcomes.'"
- **Explanation**: "Dr. Doe's statement highlights the critical role of early mental health support in shaping a student's overall well-being."
- **Link**: "As such, schools should prioritize mental health programs to foster a supportive learning environment."

3. Anecdote Integration

- **Introduction**: "Developing strong time management skills is essential for academic success."
- **Evidence**: "During my freshman year of college, I struggled to balance coursework and extracurricular activities."
- **Explanation**: "By implementing a strict study schedule and prioritizing tasks, I was able to improve my grades and reduce stress."
- **Link**: "This personal experience demonstrates the effectiveness of time management strategies in achieving academic goals."

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6.2: Effectively Integrating Textual Evidence

How Do I Effectively Integrate Textual Evidence?

Overview

In college writing, it's important to use evidence to support your ideas. Evidence often comes from textbooks, course readings, or professional scholars' work. Learning how to use this evidence responsibly and accurately is a crucial skill.

General Considerations

There are three main ways to incorporate others' writing into your paper:

1. **Quotation**: Using the exact words from the source, enclosed in quotation marks.
2. **Paraphrase**: Rewriting the source's ideas in your own words, similar in length to the original.
3. **Summary**: Condensing the main idea of the source into a shorter version in your own words.

Here are some useful signal phrases to introduce evidence: argues, asserts, contends, emphasizes, explains, observes, suggests, writes.

In Practice

Quoting

When using a quotation, integrate it into your writing with a “signal phrase.” For example, from Gordon Allport's essay “Prejudice and the Individual” (page 418):

Original Quote: “Much prejudice is caught rather than directly taught.”

Ways to integrate Allport’s quotation:

1. Allport claims that “prejudice is caught rather than directly taught” (418).
2. “Much prejudice is caught rather than directly taught,” claims Allport (418).
3. “Much prejudice,” Allport claims, “is caught rather than directly taught” (418).

Adapting Quotations:

You can change parts of a quotation to fit your sentence structure. Use square brackets to show your changes.

Original: “It should be added that overgeneralized prejudgments of this sort are prejudices only if they are not reversible when exposed to new knowledge” (417).

Adapted: The young man in my example was not prejudiced, according to Allport’s definition; his opinion was “reversible when [he was] exposed to new knowledge” (417).

Using Ellipses:

Use ellipses (...) to leave out irrelevant parts of a quotation.

Original: “The best opinion today says that if we eliminate discrimination, then—as people become acquainted with one another on equal terms—attitudes are likely to change, perhaps more rapidly than through the continued preaching or teaching of tolerance” (417).

Adapted: “The best opinion today says that if we eliminate discrimination . . . attitudes are likely to change, perhaps more rapidly than through the continued preaching or teaching of tolerance” (417).

Long Quotations:

For longer quotations (typically four or five lines), indent them from the left margin. Follow your citation style guidelines for specifics.

Paraphrasing

To paraphrase, rewrite the source's ideas in your own words and sentence structure. Even though it's in your words, you must give credit to the original author.

Original: “Education combats easy overgeneralizations, and as the educational level rises we find a reduction in stereotyped thinking” (Allport 422).

Weak Paraphrase: Learning fights against stereotypes, and as more people are more educated we notice a decrease in prejudice (422).

Strong Paraphrase: Allport explains that higher education makes it harder to make unfair assumptions about people, which means as more people pursue education, prejudice decreases (422).

Summarizing

When summarizing, condense the main idea of the source into a shorter version in your own words. You can use quotations or paraphrases within your summary if needed.

Original: “While discrimination ultimately rests on prejudice, the two processes are not identical. Discrimination denies people their natural or legal rights because of their membership in some unfavored group. Many people discriminate automatically without being prejudiced; and others, the “gentle people of prejudice,” feel irrational aversion but are careful not to show it in discriminatory behavior. Yet in general, discrimination reinforces prejudices, and prejudices provide rationalizations for discrimination. The two concepts are most distinct when it comes to seeking remedies. The corrections for discrimination are legal, or lie in a direct change of social practices; whereas the remedy for prejudice lies in education and the conversion of attitudes. The best opinion today says that if we eliminate discrimination, then—as people become acquainted with one another on equal terms—attitudes are likely to change, perhaps more rapidly than through the continued preaching or teaching of tolerance.” (Allport 417)

Weak Summary: Discrimination is when people are denied their rights because they belong to some unfavored group, and it is addressed with legal action or a change in social practices. Eliminating discrimination from society would have a drastic effect on social attitudes overall, according to Allport (417).

Strong Summary: Allport explains that discrimination happens when people are denied rights because of prejudice against their group. Discrimination supports prejudice, but if discrimination is made illegal or socially unacceptable, prejudice will decrease too (417).

How to Choose Which Method to Use

Quotation: Use a quotation if:

- You need the authority of the original writer.
- The original wording is particularly powerful or unique.

Paraphrase: Use a paraphrase if:

- You need to provide specific details, but the exact words aren't important.
- You only need one idea from the source.

Summary: Use a summary if:

- You need to give an overview of the source.
- You want to provide background information.

Exercises

The sample text in these exercises is Holly Devor’s “Gender Role Behaviors and Attitudes.”

1. Read the paragraph from Devor below, then identify which summary is weak and which is strong.

“Body postures and demeanors which communicate subordinate status and vulnerability to trespass through a message of "no threat" make people appear to be feminine. They demonstrate subordination through a minimizing of spatial use: people appear to

be feminine when they keep their arms closer to their bodies, their legs closer together, and their torsos and heads less vertical than do masculine-looking individuals. People also look feminine when they point their toes inward and use their hands in small or childlike gestures." (486)

A. Devor argues that body language suggests a great deal about gender and power in our society. People who minimize the body space they occupy and whose physical gestures are minimal and unobtrusive appear inferior and feminine (486).

B. Devor says that body postures and demeanors that imply weakness make people look feminine. Minimizing the space one takes up and using infantile gestures also makes one appear feminine (486).

2. Read the sentence from Devor below, then identify which paraphrase is weak and which is strong.

"They demonstrate subordination through a minimizing of spatial use: people appear to be feminine when they keep their arms closer to their bodies, their legs closer together, and their torsos and heads less vertical than do masculine-looking individuals." (486)

A. Devor explains that people demonstrate a lesser position by using less space, keeping arms close, legs together, and head less upright (486).

B. According to Devor, taking up less space with one's body—keeping arms and legs close and hunching to reduce height—makes one appear inferior and implies femininity (486).

3. The quotations of Devor below, taken from the paragraph in exercise 1, contain technical errors. Identify and correct them.

A. Devor argues that "[b]ody postures and demeanors which communicate subordinate status and vulnerability make people appear to be feminine" (486).

B. The actress looked particularly feminine because she "point their toes inward and use their hands in small or childlike gestures" (486).

C. Devor claims that "using their hands in small or childlike gestures" makes people look feminine (486).

Answers:

1. **A. STRONG**
   B. WEAK – This example uses too many exact words and phrases from the original.
2. **A. WEAK** – This example uses too many exact words and phrases from the source, and its sentence structure is also too close to the original.
   B. STRONG
3. **A.** Devor argues that "[b]ody postures and demeanors which communicate subordinate status and vulnerability . . . make people appear to be feminine" (486).
   B. The actress looked particularly feminine because she "point[s her] toes inward and use[s her] hands in small or childlike gestures" (486).
   C. Devor claims that "us[ing] their hands in small or childlike gestures" makes people look feminine (486).

Resources

Allport, Gordon. "Prejudice and the Individual." In *The Borzoi College Reader*, 6th ed., edited by Charles Muscatine and Marlene Griffith, 416-22. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988.

Devor, Holly. "Gender Role Behaviors and Attitudes." In *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*, 4th ed., edited by Sonia Maasik and Jack Solomon, 484-89. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003.

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6.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism

- How to Summarize: An Overview
- How to Quote and Paraphrase: An Overview
- When to Quote, When to Paraphrase
- Four Examples of Quotes and Paraphrases
- How to Avoid Plagiarism in the Research Process
- Plagiarism and the Internet

Learning how to effectively quote and paraphrase research can be difficult and it certainly takes practice. Hopefully, your abilities to make good use of your research will improve as you work through the exercises in part two and three of *The Process of Research Writing*, not to mention as you take on other research writing experiences beyond this class. The goal of this chapter is to introduce some basic strategies for summarizing, quoting and paraphrasing research in your writing and to explain how to avoid plagiarizing your research.

How to Summarize: An Overview

A summary is a brief explanation of a longer text. Some summaries, such as the ones that accompany annotated bibliographies, are very short, just a sentence or two. Others are much longer, though summaries are always much shorter than the text being summarized in the first place.

Summaries of different lengths are useful in research writing because you often need to provide your readers with an explanation of the text you are discussing. This is especially true when you are going to quote or paraphrase from a source.

Of course, the first step in writing a good summary is to do a thorough reading of the text you are going to summarize in the first place. Beyond that important start, there are a few basic guidelines you should follow when you write summary material:

- Stay “neutral” in your summarizing. Summaries provide “just the facts” and are not the place where you offer your opinions about the text you are summarizing. Save your opinions and evaluation of the evidence you are summarizing for other parts of your writing.
- Don’t quote from what you are summarizing. Summaries will be more useful to you and your colleagues if you write them in your own words.
- Don’t “cut and paste” from database abstracts. Many of the periodical indexes that are available as part of your library’s computer system include abstracts of articles. Do no “cut” this abstract material and then “paste” it into your own annotated bibliography. For one thing, this is plagiarism. Second, “cutting and pasting” from the abstract defeats one of the purposes of writing summaries and creating an annotated bibliography in the first place, which is to help you understand and explain your research.

How to Quote and Paraphrase: An Overview

Writers quote and paraphrase from research in order to support their points and to persuade their readers. A quote or a paraphrase from a piece of evidence in support of a point answers the reader’s question, “says who?”

This is especially true in academic writing since scholarly readers are most persuaded by effective research and evidence. For example, readers of an article about a new cancer medication published in a medical journal will be most interested in the scholar’s research and statistics that demonstrate the effectiveness of the treatment. Conversely, they will not be as persuaded by emotional stories from individual patients about how a new cancer medication improved the quality of their lives. While this appeal to emotion can be effective and is common in popular sources, these individual anecdotes do not carry the same sort of “scholarly” or scientific value as well-reasoned research and evidence.

Of course, your instructor is not expecting you to be an expert on the topic of your research paper. While you might conduct some primary research, it’s a good bet that you’ll be relying on secondary sources such as books, articles, and Web sites to inform and persuade your readers. You’ll present this research to your readers in the form of quotes and paraphrases.

A “quote” is a direct restatement of the exact words from the original source. The general rule of thumb is any time you use three or more words as they appeared in the original source, you should treat it as a quote. A “paraphrase” is a restatement of the

information or point of the original source in your own words.

While quotes and paraphrases are different and should be used in different ways in your research writing (as the examples in this section suggest), they do have a number of things in common. Both quotes and paraphrases should:

- be "introduced" to the reader, particularly the first time you mention a source;
- include an explanation of the evidence which explains to the reader why you think the evidence is important, especially if it is not apparent from the context of the quote or paraphrase; and
- include a proper citation of the source.

The method you should follow to properly quote or paraphrase depends on the style guide you are following in your academic writing. The two most common style guides used in academic writing are the Modern Language Association (MLA), and the American Psychological Association (APA). I discuss both of these different style guides in some detail in the Appendix of this book. Your instructor will probably assign one of these styles before you begin working on your project, however, if he/she doesn't mention this, be sure to ask.

When to Quote, When to Paraphrase

The real "art" to research writing is using quotes and paraphrases from evidence effectively in order to support your point. There are certain "rules," dictated by the rules of style you are following, such as the ones presented by the MLA or the ones presented by the APA. There are certain "guidelines" and suggestions, like the ones I offer in the previous section and the ones you will learn from your teacher and colleagues.

But when all is said and done, the question of when to quote and when to paraphrase depends a great deal on the specific context of the writing and the effect you are trying to achieve. Learning the best times to quote and paraphrase takes practice and experience.

In general, **it is best to use a quote when**:

- **The exact words of your source are important for the point you are trying to make.** This is especially true if you are quoting technical language, terms, or very specific word choices.
- **You want to highlight your *agreement* with the author's words**. If you agree with the point the author of the evidence makes and you like their exact words, use them as a quote.
- **You want to highlight your *disagreement* with the author's words**. In other words, you may sometimes want to use a direct quote to indicate exactly what it is you disagree about. This might be particularly true when you are considering the antithetical positions in your research writing projects.

In general, **it is best to paraphrase when**:

- **There is no good reason to use a quote to refer to your evidence.** If the author's exact words are not especially important to the point you are trying to make, you are usually better off paraphrasing the evidence.
- **You are trying to explain a particular a piece of evidence in order to explain or interpret it in more detail**. This might be particularly true in writing projects like critiques.
- **You need to balance a direct quote in your writing.** You need to be careful about directly quoting your research too much because it can sometimes make for awkward and difficult to read prose. So, one of the reasons to use a paraphrase instead of a quote is to create balance within your writing.

Tips for Quoting and Paraphrasing

- **Introduce** your quotes and paraphrases to your reader, especially on first reference.
- **Explain** the significance of the quote or paraphrase to your reader.
- **Cite** your quote or paraphrase properly according to the rules of style you are following in your essay.
- **Quote when** the exact words are important, when you want to highlight your agreement or your disagreement.
- **Paraphrase when** the exact words aren't important, when you want to explain the point of your evidence, or when you need to balance the direct quotes in your writing.

Four Examples of Quotes and Paraphrases

Here are four examples of what I mean about properly quoting and paraphrasing evidence in your research essays. In each case, I begin with a **BAD** example, or the way **NOT** to quote or paraphrase.

Quoting in MLA Style

Here's the first **BAD** example, where the writer is trying to follow the rules of MLA style:

There are many positive effects for advertising prescription drugs on television. "African-American physicians regard direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines as one way to educate minority patients about needed treatment and healthcare options" (Wechsler, Internet).

This is a potentially good piece of information to support a research writer's claim, but the researcher hasn't done any of the necessary work to explain where this quote comes from or to explain why it is important for supporting her point. Rather, she has simply "dropped in" the quote, leaving the interpretation of its significance up to the reader.

Now consider this revised **GOOD** (or at least **BETTER**) example of how this quote might be better introduced into the essay:

In her Pharmaceutical Executive article available through the Wilson Select Internet database, Jill Wechsler writes about one of the positive effects of advertising prescription drugs on television. "African-American physicians regard direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines as one way to educate minority patients about needed treatment and healthcare options."

In this revision, it's much more clear what point the writer is trying to make with this evidence and where this evidence comes from.

In this particular example, the passage is from a traditional print journal called *Pharmaceutical Executive*. However, the writer needs to indicate that she actually found and read this article through Wilson Select, an Internet database which reproduces the "full text" of articles from periodicals without any graphics, charts, or page numbers.

When you use a direct quote in your research, you need to the indicate page number of that direct quote or you need to indicate that the evidence has no specific page numbers. While it can be a bit awkward to indicate within the text how the writer found this information if it's from the Internet, it's important to do so on the first reference of a piece of evidence in your writing. On references to this piece of evidence after the first reference, you can use just the last name of the writer. For example:

Wechsler also reports on the positive effects of advertising prescription drugs on television. She writes…

Paraphrasing in MLA Style

In this example, the writer is using MLA style to write a research essay for a Literature class. Here is a **BAD** example of a paraphrase:

While Gatsby is deeply in love with Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*, his love for her is indistinguishable from his love of his possessions (Callahan).

There are two problems with this paraphrase. First, if this is the first or only reference to this particular piece of evidence in the research essay, the writer should include more information about the source of this paraphrase in order to properly introduce it. Second, this paraphrase is actually not of the entire article but rather of a specific passage. The writer has neglected to note the page number within the parenthetical citation.

A **GOOD** or at least **BETTER** revision of this paraphrase might look like this:

John F. Callahan suggests in his article "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Evolving American Dream" that while Gatsby is deeply in love with Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*, his love for her is indistinguishable from his love of his possessions (381).

By incorporating the name of the author of the evidence the research writer is referring to here, the source of this paraphrase is now clear to the reader. Furthermore, because there is a page number at the end of this sentence, the reader understands that this passage is a paraphrase of a particular part of Callahan's essay and not a summary of the entire essay. Again, if the research writer had introduced this source to his readers earlier, he could have started with a phrase like "Callahan suggests…" and then continued on with his paraphrase.

If the research writer were offering a brief summary of the entire essay following MLA style, he wouldn't include a page number in parentheses. For example:

John F. Callahan's article "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Evolving American Dream" examines Fitzgerald's fascination with the elusiveness of the American Dream in the novels *The Great Gatsby*, *Tender is the Night*, and *The Last Tycoon*.

Quoting in APA Style

Consider this **BAD** example in APA style, of what **NOT** to do when quoting evidence:

"If the U.S. scallop fishery were a business, its management would surely be fired, because its revenues could readily be increased by at least 50 percent while its costs were being reduced by an equal percentage." (Repetto, 2001, p. 84).

Again, this is a potentially valuable piece of evidence, but it simply isn't clear what point the research writer is trying to make with it. Further, it doesn't follow the preferred method of citation with APA style.

Here is a revision that is a **GOOD** or at least **BETTER** example:

Repetto (2001) concludes that in the case of the scallop industry, those running the industry should be held responsible for not considering methods that would curtail the problems of over-fishing. "If the U.S. scallop fishery were a business, its management would surely be fired, because its revenues could readily be increased by at least 50 percent while its costs were being reduced by an equal percentage" (p. 84).

This revision is improved because the research writer has introduced and explained the point of the evidence with the addition of a clarifying sentence. It also follows the rules of APA style. Generally, APA style prefers that the research writer refer to the author only by last name followed immediately by the year of publication. Whenever possible, you should begin your citation with the author's last name and the year of publication, and, in the case of a direct quote like this passage, the page number (including the "p.") in parentheses at the end.

Paraphrasing in APA Style

Paraphrasing in APA style is slightly different from MLA style as well. Consider first this **BAD** example of what NOT to do in paraphrasing from a source in APA style:

Computer criminals have lots of ways to get away with credit card fraud (Cameron, 2002).

The main problem with this paraphrase is there isn't enough here to adequately explain to the reader what the point of the evidence really is. Remember: your readers have no way of automatically knowing why you as a research writer think that a particular piece of evidence is useful in supporting your point. This is why it is key that you introduce and explain your evidence.

Here is a revision that is **GOOD** or at least **BETTER**:

Cameron (2002) points out that computer criminals intent on committing credit card fraud are able to take advantage of the fact that there aren't enough officials working to enforce computer crimes. Criminals are also able to use the technology to their advantage by communicating via email and chat rooms with other criminals.

Again, this revision is better because the additional information introduces and explains the point of the evidence. In this particular example, the author's name is also incorporated into the explanation of the evidence as well. In APA, it is preferable to weave in the author's name into your essay, usually at the beginning of a sentence. However, it would also have been acceptable to end an improved paraphrase with just the author's last name and the date of publication in parentheses.

How to Avoid Plagiarism in the Research Process

Plagiarism is the unauthorized or uncredited use of the writings or ideas of another in your writing. While it might not be as tangible as auto theft or burglary, plagiarism is still a form of theft.

In the academic world, plagiarism is a serious matter because ideas in the forms of research, creative work, and original thought are highly valued. Chances are, your school has strict rules about what happens when someone is caught plagiarizing. The penalty for plagiarism is severe, everything from a failing grade for the plagiarized work, a failing grade for the class, or expulsion from the institution.

You might not be aware that plagiarism can take several different forms. The most well known, **purposeful plagiarism**, is handing in an essay written by someone else and representing it as your own, copying your essay word for word from a magazine or journal, or downloading an essay from the Internet.

A much more common and less understood phenomenon is what I call **accidental plagiarism**. Accidental plagiarism is the result of improperly paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting, or citing your evidence in your academic writing. Generally, writers accidentally plagiarize because they simply don't know or they fail to follow the rules for giving credit to the ideas of others in their writing.

Both purposeful and accidental plagiarism are wrong, against the rules, and can result in harsh punishments. Ignoring or not knowing the rules of how to not plagiarize and properly cite evidence might be an *explanation*, but it is not an excuse.

To exemplify what I'm getting at, consider the examples below that use quotations and paraphrases from this brief passage:

Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties. Rock started out as an Anglo-American phenomenon and has become an industry. Nonetheless, it was able to capture the hopes of young people around the world and provided enjoyment to those of us who listened to or played rock. Sixties pop was the conscience of one or two generations that helped bring the war in Vietnam to a close. Obviously, neither rock nor pop has solved global poverty or hunger. But is this a reason to be "against" them? (ix).

And just to make it clear that *I'm* not plagiarizing this passage, here is the citation in MLA style:

Lévy, Pierre. Cyberculture. Trans. Robert Bononno. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001.

Here's an obvious example of plagiarism:

Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties.

In this case, the writer has literally taken one of Lévy's sentences and represented it as her own. That's clearly against the rules.

Here's another example of plagiarism, perhaps less obvious:

The same kind of people who criticize cyberculture are the same kind of people who criticized rock and roll music back in the fifties and sixties. But both cyberculture and rock music inspire and entertain young people.

While these aren't Lévy's exact words, they are certainly close enough to constitute a form of plagiarism. And again, even though you might think that this is a "lesser" form of plagiarism, it's still plagiarism.

Both of these passages can easily be corrected to make them acceptable quotations or paraphrases.

In the introduction of his book Cyberculture, Pierre Lévy observes that "Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties" **(ix)**.

Pierre Lévy suggests that the same kind of people who criticize cyberculture are the same kind of people who criticized rock and roll music back in the fifties and sixties. But both cyberculture and rock music inspire and entertain young people **(ix)**.

Note that changing these passages from examples of plagiarism to acceptable examples of a quotation and a paraphrase is extremely easy: properly cite your sources.

This leads to the "golden rule" of avoiding plagiarism:

> *Always cite your sources. If you are unsure as to whether you should or should not cite a particular claim or reference, you should probably cite your source.*

Often, students are unclear as to whether or not they need to cite a piece of evidence because they believe it to be "common knowledge" or because they are not sure about the source of information. When in doubt about whether or not to cite evidence in order to give credit to a source ("common knowledge" or not), you should cite the evidence.

Plagiarism and the Internet

Sometimes, I think the ease of finding and retrieving information on the World Wide Web makes readers think that this information does not need to be cited. After all, it isn't a traditional source like a book or a journal; it is available for "free." All a research writer needs to do with a web site is "cut and paste" whatever he needs into his essay, right? Wrong!

You need to cite the evidence you find from the Internet or the World Wide Web the same way you cite evidence from other sources. To not do this is plagiarism, or, more bluntly, cheating. Just because the information is “freely” available on the Internet does not mean you can use this information in your academic writing without properly citing it, much in the same way that the information from library journals and books “freely” available to you needs to be cited in order to give credit where credit is due.

It is also not acceptable to simply download graphics from the World Wide Web. Images found on the Internet are protected by copyright laws. Quite literally, taking images from the Web (particularly from commercial sources) is an offense that could lead to legal action. There are places where you can find graphics and clip art that Web publishers have made publicly available for anyone to use, but be sure that the Web site where you find the graphics makes this explicit before you take graphics as your own.

In short, you can use evidence from the Web as long as you don’t plagiarize and as long as you properly cite it; don’t take graphics from the Web unless you know the images are in the public domain.

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6.4: MLA Format

Formatting the Works Cited Page (MLA)

Whenever you incorporate outside sources into your own writing, you must provide both in-text citations (within the body of the paper) and full citations (in the works cited page). The in-text citations point your reader toward the full citations in the works cited page.

That's why the first bit of information in your in-text citation (generally, the author's name; if no name is provided, the title of the article/book/webpage) should directly match up with the beginning of your works cited entry for that source. For further information about in-text citations, please read "**Formatting In-Text Citations**."

For example, let's say I have a quote from Benedict Anderson's
Imagined Communities in my research paper. Within the body of the paper, following the quote, I include the following in-text citation: (Anderson 56). This information points to the book's entry in my works cited page:

Anderson, Benedict.
Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London: Verso, 2006. Print.

Read more…

Formatting In-text Citations (MLA)

How might you format your in-text citations so that they're more compliant with MLA guidelines?

You already know why MLA formatting guidelines are an important part of an academic paper, but let's face it—who can remember all those rules about when and where certain citation information is requisite and when and where particular punctuation is appropriate? Thankfully, memorizing all of MLA's formatting guidelines is not necessary! MLA style guides can be found easily online or in texts like
The MLA Handbook, and writers can refer to these resources when they are unclear about a particular MLA style guideline.

Nonetheless, as you create multiple drafts of your composition papers, there are some MLA conventions that you will need to call on time and time again. In particular, as you integrate source material masterfully into your work, you will be required to call on proper in-text citation guidelines repeatedly. It is therefore important that you take the time to memorize the MLA guidelines for in-text citations.

Read more…

MLA Checklist

- Is the heading in the upper left-hand corner of the first page?
- Does the heading include:
  - Your name?

- Your instructor's name?
- The course name?
- The date?

- Does the paper have an original title (other than something like "Final Paper")?
  - Is the title presented without being bolded, italicized, or placed in quotation marks
- **Read more…**

MLA Template

Take a look at a sample paper for guidance.

Exercise: In-text Citations (MLA)

Look at the sentences below, each of which contains an incorrectly formatted in-text citation. Specify the error made in each sentence; then, write a new sentence in which the in-text citation is correctly formatted.

1. The parlor metaphor of writing describes writing as entering into a conversation, as in arriving late and a parlor and talking to guests who have been there long before you have (7).

2. In "Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love," Jim Corder explains that "Everyone is an argument." (1)

3. David Sedaris's
Me Talk Pretty One Day takes place at a school in Paris (Sedaris 1).

Read more…

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6.5: Formatting the Works Cited Page (MLA)

Whenever you incorporate outside sources into your own writing, you must provide both in-text citations (within the body of the paper) and full citations (in the works cited page). The in-text citations point your reader toward the full citations in the works cited page.

That's why the first bit of information in your in-text citation (generally, the author's name; if no name is provided, the title of the article/book/webpage) should directly match up with the beginning of your works cited entry for that source.

For example, let's say I have a quote from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* in my research paper. Within the body of the paper, following the quote, I include the following in-text citation: (Anderson 56). This information points to the book's entry in my works cited page:

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006. Print.

When your reader sees the in-text citation in your essay, she may decide that the source might be valuable for her own research. When she looks at the works cited page, she can easily locate the source (because the works cited page is alphabetized and because she has the in-text citation as her referent) and then can use the full citation to retrieve a copy of the source for her own research. But aside from providing the reader with resources for her own research, the works cited page serves another function: it establishes the writer's credibility. If a writer fails to include in-text citations and/or a work's cited page, that writer has plagiarized because he or she has neglected to provide the publication information of the source. In addition, when a reader locates undocumented information in an essay, she will likely think that the information was made up by the writer or that the information was stolen from a source, or plagiarized. And when a reader peruses a writer's works cited page, she can see the types of sources used by the writer, assessing those sources in terms of their credibility. For instance, if a reader reads my works cited page and sees I cite sources from university presses such as Oxford UP and Cambridge UP, she will know that I've incorporated credible sources into my research paper. Thus, including both in-text citations and a work's cited page in a research paper provides the writer with ethos, or credibility.

Now let's take a look at how to properly format a works cited page according to MLA guidelines:

Yirinec 38

Works Cited

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006. Print.

Boucicault, Dion. "Jessie Brown; or, The Relief of Lucknow." *Plays by Dion Boucicault*. Ed Peter Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984. Print.

Bratlinger, Patrick. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988. Print.

Carens, Timothy. *Outlandish English Subjects in the Victorian Domestic Novel*. Cambridge: Palgrave, 2005. Print.

Collins, Wilkie. *The Moonstone*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 2002. Print.

Darwin, Charles. *The Voyage of the Beagle*. New York: Modern Library, 2001. Print.

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *The Sign of the Four*. London: Aziloth Books, 2010. Print.

Haggard, H. Rider. *She*. Breinigsville, PA: Dodo, 2011. Print.

Herbert, Christopher. *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma. Princeton*: Princeton UP, 2008. Print.

Placement

According to MLA guidelines, the works cited page should appear after the body of your paper and any accompanying endnotes. It should begin on a new page, and the pagination should continue from the body of the paper. In the above example, the works cited page begins on page 38, which means that the essay concluded on page 37.

General Format

The works cited page should be double-spaced throughout. The first line of each entry should be flush with the left margin; if the entry extends more than one line, ensuing lines should be indented 1/2 inch from the left margin. The first page of the works cited list should have the title "Works Cited," not "Bibliography." The works cited title should appear in the same manner as the paper's title: capitalized and centered—not bolded, within quotation marks, italicized, underlined, or in a larger font.

Entries

The entries should be alphabetized based on the author's last name. According to MLA guidelines, author names come first in an entry, then titles, then the publication information (city of publication, publisher, and date of publication), and then the type of media—the details for different types of sources vary, but this is the general structure followed. Note that if the city is not "well-known" and there is more than one city with that name, unlike New York and London, then the state or territory should be included after the city, e.g., "Roswell, GA: 2006." If no name is provided for a given source, the title of the work/webpage will take the place of the author's last name and should still be placed in its proper alphabetical location. Also note that "university" and "press" are always abbreviated "U" and "P" in works cited entries.

Here are some guidelines for commonly used sources:

Single-Authored Book

Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication. Type of media.

Example 6.5.1:

Bratlinger, Patrick. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism*, 1830–1914. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988. Print.

Book with Multiple Authors

Last Name, First Name (of first author listed), and First Name Last Name (of second author, etc.).
Title of Book. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication. Type of media.

Example 6.5.2:

Sabherhagen, Fred, and James V. Hart. *Bram Stoker's Dracula: A Francis Ford Coppola Film*. New York: Signet, 1992. Print.

Article or Chapter in an Edited Collection (or Textbook)

Last Name, First Name. "Article Title." *Title of Book*. Ed. First Name Last Name (of Editor). Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication. Page Range of Article. Type of Media.

Example 6.5.3:

Vieregge, Quentin. "Writing as Process." *Negotiating Writing Spaces*. Ed. Jennifer Yirinec and Lauren Cutlip. Plymouth, MI: Hayden-McNeil, 2011. 57–59. Print.

Article in a Print Journal

Last Name, First Name. "Article Title." *Title of Journal*. Volume #.Issue # (Date of publication): Page Range of Article. Print.

Example 6.5.4:

Rogers, Pat. "Crusoe's Home." *Essays in Criticism* 24.4 (Oct. 1974): 375–90. Print.

Journal Article Accessed Using an Electronic Database

Last Name, First Name. "Article Title." *Journal Name* Volume #.Issue # (Date of publication): Page Range of Article. *Database*. Web. Date of Access.

Example 6.5.5:

Lamont, Rose C. "Coma versus Comma: John Donne's Holy Sonnets in Edson's *WIT*." *The Massachusetts Review* 40.4 (Winter 1999–2000): 569–75. *JSTOR*. Web. 30 April 2012.

Article Accessed from an Online Journal

Last Name, First Name. "Article Title." *Journal Name* Volume #.Issue # (Date of publication): n.pag. Web. Date of Access.

Example 6.5.6:

Haynsworth, Leslie. "All the Detective's Men: Binary Coding of Masculine Identity in the Sherlock Holmes Stories." *Victorians Institute Journal 38* (2010): n.pag. Web. 16 May 2012.

Article from a Webpage

Last Name, First Name (if given). "Title of Webpage." *Website Title*. Publisher of website (often found at the bottom of the page), date of last update. Web. Date of Access. See (URL is only necessary if you think your reader won't easily be able to locate the webpage).

Example 6.5.7:

"Opening Night: Wit Starring Cynthia Nixon." *Broadway.com*. Broadway.com, Inc., 2012. Web. 12 Feb. 2012.

Entire Website

Website Title. Publisher of website, date of last update. Date of Access. See (URL is only necessary if you think your reader won't easily be able to locate the webpage).

Example 6.5.8:

Broadway.com. Broadway.com, Inc., 2012. Web. 12 Feb. 2012.

For information about how to format the works cited entries for different sources, consult The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th edition). Or, consult the
Purdue OWL.

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6.6: Citing Generative AI Content

Citation and Attribution with AI Tools

If you choose to use generative AI tools for course assignments, academic work, or other forms of published writing, you should give special attention to how you acknowledge and cite the output of those tools in your work. ***You should always check with your instructor before using AI for coursework.***

As with all things related to AI, the norms and conventions for citing AI-generated content are likely to evolve over the next few years. For now, some of the major style guides have released preliminary guidelines. Individual publishers may have their own guidance on citing AI-generated content.

Here are some fundamental ideas that hold true for citing AI generated content, no matter which citation style you're using:

- **Do cite or acknowledge the outputs of generative AI tools when you use them in your work.** This includes direct quotations and paraphrasing, as well as using the tool for tasks like editing, translating, idea generation, and data processing.
- **Do not use sources that are cited by AI tools without reading those sources yourself.** There are two different reasons for this:
  - Generative AI tools can create fake citations.
  - These tools may cite a real piece of writing, but the cited content may be inaccurate.
- **Be flexible in your approach to citing AI-generated content,** because emerging guidelines will always lag behind the current state of technology, and the way that technology is applied. If you are unsure of how to cite something, include a note in your text that describes how you used a certain tool.
- **When in doubt, remember that we cite sources for two primary purposes:** first, to give credit to the author or creator; and second, to help others locate the sources you used in your research. Use these two concepts to help make decisions about using and citing AI-generated content.

APA Style

- Released April 7, 2023

When you cite AI-generated content using APA style, you should **treat that content as the output of an algorithm**, with the author of the content being the company or organization that created the model. For example, when citing ChatGPT, the author would be OpenAI, the company that created ChatGPT.

Here are some guidelines for referencing AI-generated content in APA style:

- When you reference this content directly in your text, you should **include an in-text citation,** and an associated entry in your reference list.
- If you have used AI tools for some part of your research, you should **describe that use in your introduction or methods section,** and include the prompts that you used.

When referencing shorter passages of text, you can include that text directly in your paper. You might also include an appendix or link to an online supplement that includes the full text of long responses from a generative AI tool.

Format:

Author. (Date). *Name of tool* (Version of tool) [Large language model]. URL

Example:

OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model]. https://chat.openai.com/chat

In-Text Citation Example:

(OpenAI, 2023)

Chicago Style

- Released in spring 2023

Chicago style requires that you cite AI-generated content in your work by including either a note or a parenthetical citation, but **advises you not to include that source in your bibliography or reference list.** The reason given for this is that, because you cannot provide a link to the conversation or session with the AI tool, you should tread that content as you would a phone call or private conversation. However, AI tools are starting to introduce functionality that does allow a user to generate a sharable link to a chat conversation, so this guidance from the Chicago Manual of Style may change.

Here are some general guidelines for referencing AI-generated content in Chicago style:

- **Treat the AI tool as the author of the content.**
- If possible, **describe the prompt used to generate the content in the text,** but if that approach doesn't work, you can include that information in a footnote or endnote.
- The date used in your citation will be the **date the content was generated.**

Format:
1. Author, Title, Publisher, Date, url for the tool.

Example (if information about the prompt has been included within the text of your paper):

1. Text generated by ChatGPT, OpenAI, March 7, 2023, https://chat.openai.com/chat.

Example (including information about the prompt):

1. ChatGPT, response to "Explain how to make pizza dough from common household ingredients," OpenAI, March 7, 2023, https://chat.openai.com/chat.

MLA Style

- Released March 17, 2023

MLA style is generally **more flexible** that either APA or Chicago style, so while they provide specific examples for citing commonly used AI tools, they encourage writers to adapt those guidelines to fit the situation.

Hare are some other guidelines for referencing AI-generated content in MLA style:

- Cite the AI tool when you incorporate its output into your work. **This includes direct quotations, images, and data, as well as paraphrased content.**
- If you use an AI tool for some other purpose, such as **translating, editing, or generating an outline,** include a note about this somewhere in your paper.
- **The MLA views AI-generated content as a source with no author,** so you'll use the title of the source in your in-text citations, and in your reference list. The title you choose should be a brief description of the AI-generated content, such as an abbreviated version of the prompt you used.
- If you create a **shareable link to the chat transcript,** include that instead of the tool's URL.

Format:
"Description of chat" prompt. *Name of AI tool*, version of AI tool, Company, Date of chat, URL.

Example:

"Examples of harm reduction initiatives" prompt. *ChatGPT,* 23 Mar. version, OpenAI, 4 Mar. 2023, chat.openai.com/chat.

In-Text Citation Example:

("Examples of harm reduction")

6.6: Citing Generative AI Content is shared under a not declared license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Revising and Polishing Your Papers

7.1: Revising

7.2: Editing and Proofreading

7.3: Formal Academic Voice

7.4: AI for Revision and Editing

7.5: Peer Review Checklist

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7.1: Revising

Reviewing, Editing, Proofreading, and Making an Overview

Every time you revise your work substantially, you will be conducting three distinct functions in the following order: reviewing for purpose, editing and proofreading, making a final overview.

Reviewing for Purpose

Learning Objectives

- Understand why and when to review for purpose.
- Be prepared to use self-questioning in the purpose review process.

Although you will naturally be **reviewing for purpose** throughout the entire writing process, you should read through your first complete draft once you have finished it and carefully reconsider all aspects of your essay. As you review for purpose, keep in mind that your paper has to be clear to others, not just to you. Try to read through your paper from the point of view of a member of your targeted audience who is reading your paper for the first time. Make sure you have neither failed to clarify the points your audience will need to have clarified nor overclarified the points your audience will already completely understand.

Figure **7.1.1**

Revisiting Your Statement of Purpose

- **Self-questioning** is a useful tool when you are in the reviewing process. In anticipation of attaching a writer's memo to your draft as you send it out for peer or instructor review, reexamine the six elements of the triangle that made up your original statement of purpose (voice, audience, message, tone, attitude, and reception):
- **Voice:** Does it sound like a real human being wrote this draft? Does my introduction project a clear sense of who I am? Honestly, would someone other than my paid instructor or assigned peer(s) read beyond the first paragraph of this essay?
- **Audience:** Does my writing draw in a specific set of readers with a catchy hook? Do I address the same audience throughout the essay? If I don't, am I being intentional about shifting from one audience to another?
- **Message:** Are my main points strong and clear? Do I have ample support for each of them? Do my supporting details clearly support my main points?
- **Tone:** Am I using the proper tone given my audience? Is my language too casual or not professional enough? Or is it needlessly formal and stiff sounding? Does my tone stay consistent throughout the draft?
- **Attitude:** Will my organization make sense to another reader? Does my stance toward the topic stay consistent throughout the draft? If it doesn't, do I explain the cause of the transformation in my attitude?
- **Reception:** Is my goal or intent for writing clear? How is this essay likely to be received? What kind of motivation, ideas, or emotions will this draft draw out of my readers? What will my readers do, think, or feel immediately after finishing this essay?

Handling Peer and Instructor Reviews

In many situations, you will be required to have at least one of your peers review your essay (and you will, in turn, review at least one peer's essay). Even if you're not required to exchange drafts with a peer, it's simply essential at this point to have another pair

of eyes, so find a classmate or friend and ask them to look over your draft. In other cases, your instructor may be intervening at this point with ungraded but evaluative commentary on your draft. Whatever the system, before you post or trade your draft for review, use your answers to the questions in "Reviewing for Purpose" to tweak your original statement of purpose, giving a clear statement of your desired voice, audience, message, tone, attitude, and reception. Also, consider preparing a **descriptive outline** showing how the essay actually turned out and comparing that with your original plan, or consider writing a brief narrative describing how the essay developed from idea to execution. Finally, include any other questions or concerns you have about your draft, so that your peer reader(s) or instructor can give you useful, tailored feedback. These reflective statements and documents could be attached with your draft as part of a writer's memo. Remember, the more guidance you give your readers, regardless of whether they are your peers or your instructor, the more they will be able to help you.

When you receive suggestions for content changes from your instructors, try to put aside any tendencies to react defensively, so that you can consider their ideas for revisions with an open mind. If you are accustomed only to getting feedback from instructors that is accompanied by a grade, you may need to get used to the difference between **evaluation** and **judgment**. In college settings, instructors often prefer to intervene most extensively after you have completed a first draft, with evaluative commentary that tends to be suggestive, forward-looking, and free of a final quantitative judgment (like a grade). If you read your instructors' feedback in those circumstances as final, you can miss the point of the exercise. You're supposed to do something with this sort of commentary, not just read it as the justification for a (nonexistent) grade.

Sometimes peers think they're supposed to "sound like an English teacher" so they fall into the trap of "correcting" your draft, but in most cases, the prompts used in college- level peer reviewing discourage that sort of thing. In many situations, your peers will give you ideas that will add value to your paper, and you will want to include them. In other situations, your peers' ideas will not really work into the plan you have for your paper. It is not unusual for peers to offer ideas that you may not want to implement. Remember, your peers' ideas are only suggestions, and it is your essay, and you are the person who will make the final decisions. If your peers happen to be a part of the audience to which you are writing, they can sometimes give you invaluable ideas. And if they're not, take the initiative to find outside readers who might actually be a part of your audience.

When you are reviewing a peer's essay, keep in mind that the author likely knows more about the topic than you do, so don't question content unless you are certain of your facts. Also, do not suggest changes just because you would do it differently or because you want to give the impression that you are offering ideas. Only suggest changes that you seriously think would make the essay stronger.

key takeaways

- You should review for purpose while you are writing, after you finish your first draft, and after you feel your essay is nearly complete.
- Use self-questioning to evaluate your essay as you are revising the purpose. Keep your voice, audience, message, tone, attitude, and reception in mind as you write and revise.
- When you are reviewing a peers' essay, make only suggestions that you think will make the essay stronger. When you receive reviews from instructors or peers, try to be open minded and consider the value of the ideas to your essay.

Exercise 7.1.1

1. Find multiple drafts of an essay you have recently completed. Write a descriptive outline of at least two distinct drafts you wrote during the process.
2. For a recently completed essay, discuss how at least one element of your statement of purpose (voice, audience, message, tone, attitude, or reception) changed over the course of the writing process.
3. With your writing group, develop five questions you think everyone in your class should have to answer about their essay drafts before submitting them for evaluation from a peer or your instructor.

Editing and Proofreading

Learning Objectives

- Understand why editing and proofreading is important even for careful writers.
- Recognize the benefits of peer editing and proofreading and the similarities between editing and proofreading your work and the work of others.
- Know how to edit and proofread for issues of both mechanics and style.

When you have made some revisions to your draft based on feedback and your recalibration of your purpose for writing, you may now feel your essay is nearly complete. However, you should plan to read through the entire final draft at least one additional time. During this stage of **editing and proofreading** your entire essay, you should be looking for general consistency and clarity. Also, pay particular attention to parts of the paper you have moved around or changed in other ways to make sure that your new versions still work smoothly.

Although you might think editing and proofreading isn't necessary since you were fairly careful when you were writing, the truth is that even the very brightest people and best writers make mistakes when they write. One of the main reasons that you are likely to make mistakes is that your mind and fingers are not always moving along at the same speed nor are they necessarily in sync. So what ends up on the page isn't always exactly what you intended. A second reason is that, as you make changes and adjustments, you might not totally match up the original parts and revised parts. Finally, a third key reason for proofreading is because you likely have errors you typically make and proofreading gives you a chance to correct those errors.

Figure **7.1.2**

Editing and proofreading can work well with a partner. You can offer to be another pair of eyes for peers in exchange for their doing the same for you. Whether you are editing and proofreading your work or the work of a peer, the process is basically the same. Although the rest of this section assumes you are editing and proofreading your work, you can simply shift the personal issues, such as "Am I…" to a viewpoint that will work with a peer, such as "Is she…"

As you edit and proofread, you should look for common problem areas that stick out. There are certain writing rules that you must follow, but other more stylistic writing elements are more subjective and will require judgment calls on your part.

Be proactive in evaluating these subjective, stylistic issues since failure to do so can weaken the potential impact of your essay. Keeping the following questions in mind as you edit and proofread will help you notice and consider some of those subjective issues:

- **At the word level:** Am I using descriptive words? Am I varying my word choices rather than using the same words over and over? Am I using active verbs? Am I writing concisely? Does every word in each sentence perform a function?
- **At the sentence level:** Am I using a variety of sentence beginnings? Am I using a variety of sentence formats? Am I using ample and varied transitions? Does every sentence advance the value of the essay?
- **At the paragraph and essay level:** How does this essay look? Am I using paragraphing and paragraph breaks to my advantage? Are there opportunities to make this essay work better visually? Are the visuals I'm already using necessary? Am I using the required formatting (or, if there's room for creativity, am I using the optimal formatting)? Is my essay the proper length?

key takeaways

- Edit and proofread your work since it is easy to make mistakes between your mind and your typing fingers, as well as when you are moving around parts of your essay.
- Trading a nearly final version of a draft with peers is a valuable exercise since others can often more easily see your mistakes than you can. When you edit and proofread for a peer, you use the same process as when you edit and proofread for yourself.
- As you are editing and proofreading, you will encounter some issues that are either right or wrong and you simply have to correct them when they are wrong. Other more stylistic issues, such as using adequate transitions, ample descriptive words, and enough variety in sentence formats, are subjective. Besides dealing with matters of correctness, you will have to make choices about subjective and stylistic issues while you proofread.

Exercise 7.1.2

1. Write a one-page piece about how you decided which college to attend. Give a copy of your file (or a hard copy) to three different peers to edit and proofread. Then edit and proofread your page yourself. Finally, compare your editing and proofreading results to those of your three peers. Categorize the suggested revisions and corrections as objective standards of correctness or subjective matters of style.
2. Create a "personal editing and proofreading guide" that includes an overview of both objective and subjective issues covered in this book that are common problems for you in your writing. In your guide, include tips from this book and self-questions that can help you with your problem writing areas.

Making a Final Overview

Learning Objectives

- Understand the types of problems that might recur throughout your work.
- Know when you should conduct isolated checks during a final overview.
- Understand how to conduct isolated checks.

While you are managing the content of your essay and moving things around in it, you are likely to notice isolated issues that could recur throughout your work. To verify that these issues are satisfactorily dealt with from the beginning to the end of your essay, make a checklist of the issues as you go along. Conduct isolated checks of the whole paper after you are finished editing and proofreading. You might conduct some checks by flipping through the hard-copy pages, some by clicking through the pages on your computer, and some by conducting "**computer finds**" (good for cases when you want to make sure you've used the same proper noun correctly and consistently). Remember to take advantage of all the editing features of the word processing program you're using, such as spell check and grammar check. In most versions of Word, for instance, you'll see red squiggly lines underneath misspelled words and green squiggly lines underneath misuses of grammar. Right click on those underlined words to examine your options for revision.

Figure **7.1.3**

The following checklist shows examples of the types of things that you might look for as you **make a final pass** (or final passes) through your paper. It often works best to make a separate pass for each issue because you are less likely to miss an issue and you will probably be able to make multiple, single-issue passes more quickly than you can make one multiple-issue pass.

- All subheadings are placed correctly (such as in the center or at the beginning of a page).
- All the text is the same size and font throughout.
- The page numbers are all formatted and appearing as intended.
- All image and picture captions are appearing correctly.
- All spellings of proper nouns have been corrected.
- The words "there" and "their" and "they're" are spelled correctly. (Or you can insert your top recurring error here.)
- References are all included in the citation list.
- Within the citation list, references are all in a single, required format (no moving back and forth between Modern Language Association [MLA] and American Psychological Association [APA], for instance).
- All the formatting conventions for the final manuscript follow the style sheet assigned by the instructor (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago Manual of Style [CMS], or other).

This isn't intended to be an all-inclusive checklist. Rather, it simply gives you an idea of the types of things for which you might look as you conduct your final check. You should develop your unique list that might or might not include these same items.

key takeaways

- Often a good way to make sure you do not miss any details you want to change is to make a separate pass through your essay for each area of concern. You can conduct passes by flipping through hard copies, clicking through pages on a computer, or using the "find" feature on a computer.

- You should conduct a final overview with isolated checks after you are finished editing and proofreading the final draft.
- As you are writing, make a checklist of recurring isolated issues that you notice in your work. Use this list to conduct isolated checks on the final draft of your paper.

? Exercise 7.1.3

Complete each sentence to create a logical item for a list to use for a final isolated check. Do not use any of the examples given in the text.

1. All the subheadings are…
2. The spacing between paragraphs…
3. Each page includes…
4. I have correctly spelled…
5. The photos are all placed…
6. The words in the flow charts and diagrams…

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7.2: Editing and Proofreading

When revising written work within a writing community, it is a good idea to visualize the process and workflow before you get started in earnest. While revision is a recursive (circling back) practice and writers frequently move back and forth between editorial stages, the flowchart below is designed to help you follow and appreciate the general progression of revision.

Figure **7.2.1**

Revising After Writing Community Feedback

After submitting and receiving your peer reviews in your writing community, return to your own work and take a long, hard look at the recommendations your instructor and classmates have made regarding your draft. Remember that you are seeking ways to make the meaning clear in your essay. Do not be afraid of changing the essay in radical ways, especially if the ideas and organization haven't conveyed the meaning you intended. Build on the strengths and add, cut, reorder, or start over where needed.

Use a Writing Rubric

After you have incorporated some of the recommendations into your revision, review the **6+1 Traits Rubric**, which features the five areas (below) by which the final draft of your essay will be graded. Make sure that you are fully editing and proofreading your draft.

By *editing*, you are reviewing and revising the big picture items:

1. Ideas—Are my ideas and content developed?
You are looking for ideas to be clear and focused, remaining on topic throughout the essay. Make sure your details support the central focus of the narrative.

2. Organization—Does my essay provide a logical organization, demonstrating an order or structure that supports the ideas clearly?
Give your narrative a creative title and provide an inviting introduction. Craft thoughtful transitions as the the essay progresses, making sure that the structure is logical.

3. Word Choice—Have I provided language that sounds natural and conveys the intended message of the essay?
Your essay should flow naturally from your own choice of words and phrases. Use action verbs and avoid linking verbs. Don't forget to read aloud to see if your voice comes through in this essay.

4. Sentence Fluency—Are my sentences well-built, demonstrating a strong sense of varied structure?
One quick editing technique you can use to test for fluency is to circle the first word of every sentence. Do you see initial words repeating? Do you start sentences with articles (a, an, the) or with pronouns (or names of characters)? If so, try to incorporate some prepositional phrases and introductory clauses so you incorporate sentence variety and create a rhythm to your sentences that avoid choppiness.

By *proofreading*, you are taking into consideration standard writing conventions:

5. Conventions—Have I demonstrated a good grasp of standard writing conventions? Have I checked the essay for any misspellings? Is my punctuation accurate? Have I avoided the pitfalls of many common grammar errors? Did I meet the word

counts required for this essay? Do I have proper paragraph structure? Have I made sure that what I mean to say is not undermined or impeded by grammatical, mechanical, or stylistic errors?

Proofread Your Writing Backward

While there are a **number of ways to proofread** written content for errors, it is often useful to review your writing "backward." That is, you read the last sentence of the essay first, then backward, sentence by sentence, until you finish your proofreading with the first sentence. This kind of reading isolates individual sentences from the essay's context, so that you are not reading for meaning within a paragraph but for errors that may appear in individual sentences.

Apply the backward review to the *Revision Practices within a Writing Community* flowchart above: did you find the error?

Writing to the Final Version: Suit Up!

Writing a polished paper is, in and of itself, an intellectual challenge and following formatting guidelines in this and other college courses signals to your readers that your paper should be taken seriously as a contribution to a particular course or a given academic or professional field. Think of presenting your essay in the correct format like wearing a tailored suit to a job interview.

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7.3: Formal Academic Voice

How Can I Create a Formal Writing Voice?

If you were giving an important speech to a group of people you do not know, would you use the same kind of language you use when talking with friends? Probably not. Recognizing your lack of familiarity with the audience, the importance of the occasion, your desire to demonstrate your knowledge of the subject, and the impression you would like to make, you would probably use a more formal voice for your speech than what you would use when talking with close friends.

For all of the essays you write for this course, you should use a formal writing voice. You should use the kind of language you would use when giving an important speech, not the kind of language you might use when talking with close friends. A formal tone helps establish the writer's respect for the audience and suggests that the writer is serious about his or her topic. It is the kind of tone that educated people use when communicating with other educated people. Most academic writing uses a formal tone.

The following guidelines should help you maintain a formal writing voice in your essays.

1. Do not use first-person pronouns ("I," "me," "my," "we," "us," etc.).

Using these expressions in analytical and persuasive essays can make the writing wordy, can make the writer seem less confident of his or her ideas, and can give the essay an informal tone. Use of first-person pronouns is unnecessary in the kinds of essays you are writing for the course. Readers will know that they are reading your thoughts, beliefs, or opinions, so you do not need to state, "I think that," "I believe that," or "in my opinion." Simply delete these expressions from sentences, and you will be left with stronger sentences.

Example
I think that this character is confused.
This character is confused.
(The second sentence is less wordy, sounds more formal, and conveys a more confident tone.)

"One," "the reader," "readers," "the viewer," or something similar sometimes can be used effectively in place of first-person pronouns in formal papers, but be careful not to overuse these expressions. You want to sound formal, not awkward and stiff.

Example
I can sense the character's confusion.
Readers can sense the character's confusion.

2. Avoid addressing readers as "you."

Addressing readers using second-person pronouns ("you, your") can make an essay sound informal and can bring assumptions into an essay that are not true. A student once wrote in her essay, "If you wear a tube top, guys might think that you are easy." I wondered why the student would think that I, a male, would wear a tube top. As with first-person pronouns, second-person pronouns can be replaced by words such as "one," "the reader," "readers," and "the viewer."

3. Avoid the use of contractions.

Contractions are shortened versions of words that use apostrophes in place of letters, such as "can't," "isn't," "she's," and "wouldn't." The more formal, non-contracted versions are "cannot," "is not," "she is," and "would not." You might be surprised by how much better a sentence can sound if non-contracted versions of the words replace the contractions.

Example
The character isn't aware that he's surrounded by people he can't trust.
The character is not aware that he is surrounded by people he cannot trust.

Making your writing more formal by avoiding contractions is easy: just find the contractions and replace them with the non-contracted versions of the words.

4. Avoid colloquialism and slang expressions.

Colloquial diction is informal language used in everyday speech and includes such words as "guys," "yeah," "stuff," "kind of," "okay," and "big deal." Highly informal diction, such as "freak out" and "dissing," falls into the category of "slang." While slang words often are vivid and expressive, slang comes and goes quickly, another reason why slang should be avoided in formal writing. Both colloquialism and slang expressions convey an informal tone and should be avoided in formal writing.

Example

The guy was nailed for ripping off a liquor store.
The man was convicted of robbing a liquor store.

As you avoid informal language, be careful not to use words that suggests ideas that you may not intend. "The gentleman was convicted of robbing a liquor store" would probably leave readers wondering why the man who robbed the store is considered to be a "gentleman." Likewise, "the lady was convicted of robbing a liquor store" would probably cause readers to wonder why a woman who robs a liquor store is considered to be a "lady."

5. Avoid nonstandard diction.

Nonstandard diction refers to expressions that are not considered legitimate words according to the rules of Standard English usage. Nonstandard diction includes "ain't," "theirselves," "hisself," "anyways," "alot" (the accepted version is "a lot"), and "alright" (the accepted version is "all right"). Most good dictionaries will identify such expressions with the word "Nonstandard." Because nonstandard expressions generally are not regarded as legitimate words, I mark these expressions in essays as examples of "inaccurate word choice."

6. Avoid abbreviated versions of words.

For example, instead of writing "photo," "phone" and "TV," write "photograph," "telephone," and "television."

7. Avoid the overuse of short and simple sentences.

While the writer might use formal diction in such sentences, too many short and simple sentences can make an essay sound informal, as if the writer is not recognizing that the audience is capable of reading and understanding more complex and longer sentences. Short and simple sentences can be used effectively in formal writing, but heavy reliance on such sentences reflects poorly on the writer and gives the writing an informal tone.

Final Comments

Do not confuse formal diction with presumptuous diction (the kind of language that seems intended mainly to impress readers) or jargon (the kind of language only familiar to people within a specialized field, such as computer technicians).

You should not sound "artificial" as you use formal diction. Instead, consider that different situations require different uses of language and that educated people are able to adapt their use of language to a variety of writing and speaking situations. Educated people have several different writing and speaking voices, and one voice is no more "genuine" than another. Instead, the different voices reflect choices based on the writing or speaking situation. Through your word choice in essays, you can portray yourself as an intelligent person who is aware of your audience--a group of well-educated people whom you do not know. Imagine the kind of language that you might use in a job interview for an important job. With formal diction, you can express yourself clearly, accurately, and effectively, without relying on the kind of language that you might use in less formal situations.

Watch It!

Formal vs Informal Writing: What's the Difference and When to Use Them from EzineArticles

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7.4: AI for Revision and Editing

Read the page below to help you through the process of using AI to revise your chosen essay. AI-powered writing tools can help students improve their writing in a variety of ways.

How Can AI Help with Revision?

- **Identifying grammar and spelling errors:** AI tools can quickly and accurately identify grammar and spelling errors, freeing up students to focus on more creative aspects of their writing.
- **Providing feedback on style and clarity:** AI tools can also provide feedback on style and clarity, helping students to make their writing more engaging and easier to read.
- **Suggesting new ideas and content:** AI tools can also suggest new ideas and content, helping students to expand their writing and make it more informative.

Here are some specific AI-powered writing tools that you can use:

- **ChatGPT:** ChatGPT is a large language model chatbot developed by OpenAI. It can be used to generate text, translate languages, write different kinds of creative content, and answer your questions in an informative way.

  ChatGPT

- **Gemini:** This is a large language model chatbot developed by Google AI. It can be used for a variety of tasks, including generating text, translating languages, and writing different kinds of creative content.

  Google Gemini

- **Grammarly:** Grammarly is a popular grammar checker that can help students identify and correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. www.grammarly.com
- **Claude:** Claude is a generative AI model that can help revise and refine your writing. Use it to edit, revise, suggest tips, and proofread your papers. Claude.ai

How to Use AI to Revise Writing

To use AI to revise writing, follow these steps:

1. Experiment and "play" with different AI models, and choose an AI writing tool that meets your needs.
2. Input your writing into the tool, with a specific prompt (see below) for tools like GPT, Bard and Claude
3. Review the feedback provided by the tool.
4. Make any necessary revisions to your writing. Ultimately, make it yours!

Sample prompts to give for AI revision:

- "Identify grammar and spelling errors in my writing." (Then paste in your writing. Do not press "enter" before pasting in your text)
- "Suggest ways to improve the clarity and conciseness of my writing."
- "Generate new ideas for my writing."
- "Check my writing for plagiarism."
- "Translate my writing into another language."

Using AI for Improving Evidence-Based Arguments:

Here are 15 highly effective ChatGPT prompts to improve evidence-based argument essays:

1. "Please restate my thesis statement to make sure it is clear, concise and provides a compelling position on my topic."
2. "Please identify areas in my essay that could use additional evidence and suggest the types of evidence that would strengthen my argument."
3. "Please analyze the logic, flow, and organization of my essay argument. Provide feedback on improving transitions or sequencing."
4. "Please evaluate whether my evidence fully supports all of my claims related to the thesis statement. Recommend any gaps."

5. "Please assess if any counterarguments or limitations should be addressed to make a more balanced case."
6. "Please rewrite the topic sentence for each body paragraph to ensure it establishes a clear reasoning building block for my overall thesis."
7. "Please reword any overly verbose or unclear sentences while retaining my intent and voice."
8. "Which section of the essay is weakest in terms of claims versus evidence? Please provide strengthening suggestions."
9. "Please suggest additional authoritative sources suitable for citation to back up key arguments."
10. "Please assess if the conclusion provides proper summation or if key takeaways need to be added or clarified."
11. "Please evaluate the tone, style and word choice of the essay for an academic audience. Suggest any improvements."
12. “Please rephrase overly used words or vague descriptors to enhance clarity.”
13. “Check for proper grammar, spelling, punctuation and citation style. Flag any issues.”
14. “How could the essay counterarguments be improved? Please provide specific strengthening recommendations.”
15. “For increased impact, which 1-2 sentences should I amplify with more evidence or descriptive language?”

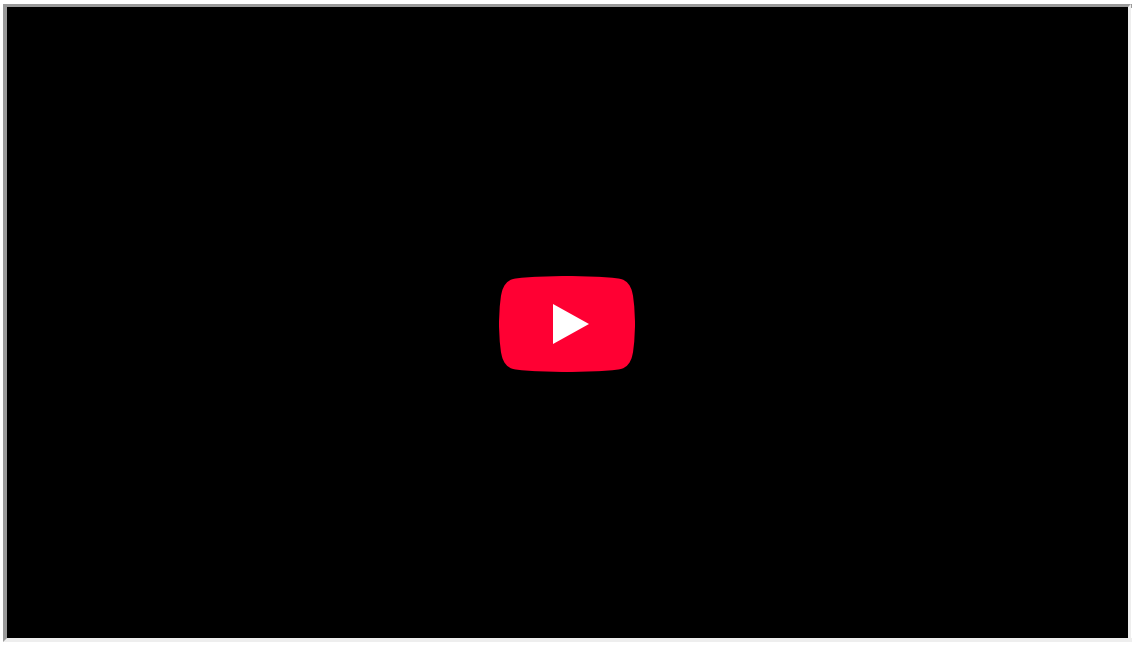
Tips for Using AI Writing Tools Effectively

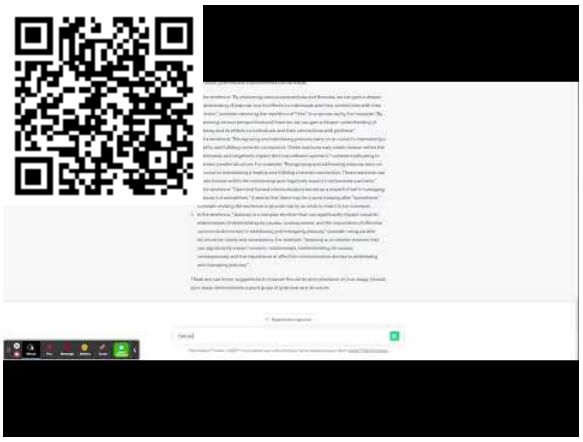
Here are some tips for using AI writing tools effectively:

- Use AI tools to identify errors, but don't rely on them to correct all of your errors.
- Use AI tools to get feedback on your style and clarity, but don't be afraid to make changes that the tool doesn't recommend.
- Be aware of the limitations of AI writing tools. AI tools are not perfect, and they can often make mistakes.

Video Resource: Using Chat GPT for Editing and Revision

Watch the video below for a complete walkthrough of how to use ChatGPT features to improve your academic writing.





AI Supports and Plagiarism

While we may make use of AI tools to brainstorm ideas, help structure outlines and/or revise our own writing, **submitting a fully AI-generated paper (over 50% probability) will be considered plagiarism** and will require a rewrite of assignment for any credit.

Where is it okay to use AI in an essay?

- Topic brainstorming
- Thesis generation
- Outlining help
- Paragraph revision (meaning you completely write your own paragraph and then ask AI for suggestions for improvement.)
- Editing for grammar and conventions
- Formatting a works cited page after your enter your own source information.

Where is it not okay to use AI in an essay?

- Generating entire paragraphs or sections of your paper
- Finding quotations, evidence, or other information that you have not verified online
- Creating citations or works cited pages without entering your own sources.

AI Considerations

- Be sure that the **tone of your essay is consistent** throughout. If one paragraph sounds like it was written by a professor and the next sounds like it was written by a high school student, we have a problem.
- Frequently **AI-generated words (such as: multifaceted, complexities, delve, etc.)** should be avoided or rephrased
- Pay attention to formatting. If your paper is incorrectly formatted (or not formatted at all) but your paragraphs are written perfectly, this is suspicious.
- Overall, keep your focus on the purpose of this class. We want to learn to think deeply and communicate effectively no matter the setting or available technology. **Challenging yourself is how you grow intelligence.**

Please contact me if you have questions regarding this.

Takeaways

AI writing tools can be a valuable resource for improving writing. However, it is important to use these tools wisely and to remember that they are not a substitute for human thought. You're not required to use AI if you'd rather not. We have a wonderful team of human tutors available to help you as well! Click the online tutoring link in the Canvas sidebar to access them.

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7.5: Peer Review Checklist

Figure **7.5.1**

Each essay is made up of multiple parts. In order to have a strong essay each part must be logical and effective. In many cases essays will be written with a strong thesis, but the rest of the paper will be lacking; making the paper ineffective. An essay is only as strong as its weakest point.

One of the most important steps for creating a strong essay is to have others review it. By completing a peer review you will be able to create a better thesis statement and supporting arguments.

Comprehensive Peer Editing Checklist for College-Level Essays in MLA Format

General Structure and Content

1. **Thesis Statement**: The thesis statement should clearly present the main argument or central idea of the essay.
   - Needs Work Example: "Social media is bad."
   - Skillful Example: "The rise of social media has significantly impacted interpersonal communication by promoting instant gratification, reducing face-to-face interactions, and increasing the spread of misinformation."
2. **Introduction**: The introduction should engage the reader, provide background information, and lead smoothly to the thesis statement.
   - Needs Work Example: "Social media is everywhere. This essay will talk about its effects."
   - Skillful Example: "In recent years, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have revolutionized the way people communicate. However, while these platforms offer numerous benefits, they also pose significant challenges. This essay explores how social media has affected interpersonal communication, focusing on instant gratification, the decline in face-to-face interactions, and the proliferation of misinformation."
3. **Body Paragraphs**: Each body paragraph should have a clear topic sentence, logical organization, support the thesis, and include evidence and explanations.
   - Needs Work Example:
     - Topic Sentence: "Social media has many effects."
     - Support and Evidence: "It’s interesting how people use it."
     - Transition: "Next."
   - Skillful Example:
     - Topic Sentence: "One major impact of social media is the promotion of instant gratification."
     - Support and Evidence: "Studies show that social media users are accustomed to receiving immediate responses to their posts, which can lead to decreased patience and attention spans (Smith, 2020)."
     - Transition: "Furthermore, the preference for online communication can lead to a decline in face-to-face interactions."
4. **Conclusion**: The conclusion should summarize the main points, restate the thesis in a new way, and provide a final thought or call to action.
   - Needs Work Example: "In conclusion, social media is bad."

- Skillful Example: "In conclusion, while social media offers new avenues for connection, it also promotes instant gratification, reduces face-to-face interactions, and facilitates the spread of misinformation. By understanding these impacts, individuals can make more informed choices about their social media use and work towards fostering more meaningful connections both online and offline."

Content and Development

1. **Relevance**: All content should be relevant to the thesis and topic.
   - Needs Work Example: "I also think that social media can be fun."
   - Skillful Example: "To understand the full impact of social media, it is important to consider its effect on mental health. Research indicates a strong correlation between heavy social media use and increased levels of anxiety and depression (Jones, 2021)."
2. **Depth of Analysis**: Ideas should be analyzed thoroughly, showing critical thinking and insight.
   - Needs Work Example: "People like getting likes on their posts."
   - Skillful Example: "The concept of instant gratification is deeply ingrained in social media culture. Unlike traditional communication methods, social media provides immediate feedback, which can alter users' expectations and behavior over time. For instance, the dopamine release associated with receiving 'likes' and comments can create an addictive cycle, making users crave continuous engagement (Brown, 2019)."
3. **Evidence and Support**: Claims should be supported by sufficient, credible evidence.
   - Needs Work Example: "Teens often feel overwhelmed by social media."
   - Skillful Example: "According to a 2020 study by the Pew Research Center, 45% of teens report feeling overwhelmed by the drama on social media, which affects their mental well-being (Pew Research Center, 2020)."

Language and Style

1. **Clarity and Precision**: The writing should be clear and precise.
   - Needs Work Example: "Social media has changed communication a lot."
   - Skillful Example: "Social media platforms have dramatically altered the landscape of interpersonal communication, fostering both positive and negative changes."
2. **Tone and Formality**: The tone should be appropriate for an academic essay, and the language should be formal and objective.
   - Needs Work Example: "You gotta learn how to use social media right."
   - Skillful Example: "The research underscores the necessity of developing digital literacy skills to navigate the complexities of online interactions."
3. **Variety**: There should be a variety of sentence structures and vocabulary.
   - Needs Work Example: "Social media is good and bad. Social media connects people. Social media affects interactions."
   - Skillful Example: "While social media encourages global connectivity, it simultaneously diminishes the quality of personal interactions. This dichotomy is evident in the way individuals prioritize online relationships over real-life conversations."

Grammar and Mechanics

1. **Sentence Structure**: Sentences should be complete and free of run-ons and fragments.
   - Needs Work Example: "Social media has benefits it also has challenges like mental health and social skills."
   - Skillful Example: "Despite its many benefits, social media has introduced significant challenges, particularly in terms of mental health and social skills."
2. **Grammar and Punctuation**: The essay should be free of grammatical errors and use correct punctuation.
   - Needs Work Example: "Researchers have found that heavy social media use is linked to increased levels of anxiety, and depression (Smith 2020)"
   - Skillful Example: "Researchers have found that heavy social media use is linked to increased levels of anxiety and depression (Smith, 2020)."
3. **Spelling**: The essay should be free of spelling mistakes.
   - Needs Work Example: "Social media can exascerbate feelings of loneliness and isolation."

- Skillful Example: "Social media can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and isolation."

MLA Formatting

1. **General Formatting**: The essay should follow MLA formatting guidelines, including font, spacing, and margins.
   - Needs Work Example: Essay is typed in 11-point Arial font, single-spaced, with 1.5-inch margins.
   - Skillful Example: Essay is typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins.
2. **In-Text Citations**: In-text citations should be correctly formatted according to MLA guidelines.
   - Needs Work Example: "According to Smith, social media users experience higher levels of anxiety (45)."
   - Skillful Example: "According to Smith, social media users experience higher levels of anxiety (Smith 45)."
3. **Works Cited Page**: The Works Cited page should list all sources cited in the essay and be correctly formatted according to MLA guidelines.
   - Needs Work Example: "Works Cited Brown, Jane. 'The Effects of Social Media on Mental Health.' Journal of Social Media Studies. 2019."
   - Skillful Example: "Works Cited Brown, Jane. 'The Effects of Social Media on Mental Health.' Journal of Social Media Studies, vol. 10, no. 2, 2019, pp. 123-145."
4. **Headings and Title**: The heading and title should follow MLA guidelines and include all required information.
   - Needs Work Example: "Caroline Scott 1 August 2024 The Impact of Social Media on Interpersonal Communication"
   - Skillful Example: "Caroline Scott Professor Smith English 101 1 August 2024 The Impact of Social Media on Interpersonal Communication"

Final Checks

1. **Title and Heading**: The title should be informative and engaging, and the heading should include all required information.
   - Needs Work Example: "Essay 1"
   - Skillful Example: "The Impact of Social Media on Interpersonal Communication"
2. **Overall Flow**: The essay should read smoothly from beginning to end with logical transitions between paragraphs.
   - Needs Work Example: The essay has abrupt transitions and disjointed paragraphs.
   - Skillful Example: The essay reads smoothly from introduction to conclusion, with each paragraph logically following the previous one.
3. **Length**: The essay should meet the required length as specified by the assignment.
   - Needs Work Example: Essay is only 900 words.
   - Skillful Example: Essay is 1,500 words as required.
4. **Assignment Requirements**: The essay should fulfill all specific requirements of the assignment prompt.
   - Needs Work Example: Essay only addresses the impacts of social media without meeting the source requirement or proper formatting.
   - Skillful Example: Essay fulfills all requirements of the assignment prompt, including addressing the impacts of social media on communication, using at least five scholarly sources, and following MLA format.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Taking a Stand- Argument Writing

8.1: Introduction to Argument Essay

8.2: Techniques

8.3: Avoiding Logical Fallacies

8.4: Writing for Success- Argument

8.5: Activities

8.6: Model Texts by Student Authors

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8.1: Introduction to Argument Essay

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different. An **argument** is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue effectively in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive, persuasive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.

In this module, you will develop your skills in argumentative and persuasive writing.

Module Outcomes

After successfully completing this module, you should be able to:

1. Determine the purpose and structure of an argumentative essay.
2. Understand how to write an argumentative essay.

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8.2: Techniques

Techniques

"But I Just Want to Write an Unbiased Essay"

Let's begin by addressing a common concern my students raise when writing about controversial issues: neutrality. It's quite likely that you've been trained, at some point in your writing career, to avoid bias, to be objective, to be impartial. However, this is a habit you need to unlearn, because *every text is biased* by virtue of being rhetorical. All rhetoric has a purpose, whether declared or secret, and therefore is partial.

Instead of being impartial, I encourage you to be **multipartial**. In other words, you should aim to inhabit many different positions in your argument- not zero, not one, but many. This is an important distinction: no longer is your goal to be unbiased; rather, it is to be balanced. You will not provide your audience a neutral perspective, but rather a perspective conscientious of the many other perspectives out there.

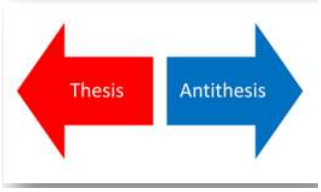
Common Forms of Argumentation

In the study of argumentation, scholars and authors have developed a great variety of approaches; when it come to convincing, there are many different paths that lead to our destination. For the sake of succinctness, we will focus on two: the Aristotelian argument and the Rogerian Argument.[89] While these two are not opposites, they are built on different values. Each will employ **rhetorical appeals** like those discussed later, but their purposes and guiding beliefs are different.

Aristotelian Argument

In Ancient Greece, debate was a cornerstone of social life. Intellectuals and philosophers devoted hours upon hours of each day to honing their argumentative skills. For one group of thinkers, the Sophists, the focus of argumentation was to find a distinctly "right" or "wrong" position. The more convincing argument was the right one: the content mattered less than the technique by which it was delivered.

In turn, the purpose of an **Aristotelian argument** is to persuade someone (the other debater and/ or the audience) that the speaker was correct. Aristotelian arguments are designed to bring the audience from one point of view to the other.



In this diagram, you can observe the tension between a point and counterpoint (or, to borrow a term from German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "thesis" and "antithesis.") These two viewpoints move in two opposite directions, almost like a tug-of-war.

Therefore, an Aristotelian arguer tries to demonstrate the validity of their direction while addressing counterarguments: "Here's what I believe and why I'm right; here's what you believe and why it's wrong." The author seeks to persuade their audience through the sheer virtue of their truth.

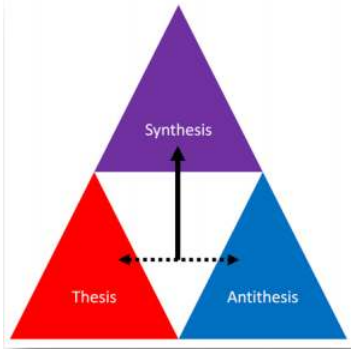
You can see Aristotelian argumentation applied in "We Don't Care about Child Slaves."

Rogerian Argument

In contrast, **Rogerian arguments** are more invested in compromise. Based on the work of psychologist Carl Rogers, Rogerian arguments are designed to enhance the connection between both sides of an issue. This kind of argument acknowledges the value of disagreement in material communities to make moral, political, and practical decisions.

Often, a Rogerian argument will begin with a fair statement of someone else's position and consideration of how that could be true. In other words, a Rogerian arguer addresses their 'opponent' more like a teammate: "What you think is not unreasonable; I disagree, but I can see how you're thinking, and I appreciate it." Notice that by taking the other ideas on their own terms, you demonstrate respect and cultivate trust and listening.

The rhetorical purpose of a Rogerian argument, then, is to come to a conclusion by negotiating common ground between moral-intellectual differences. Instead of debunking an opponent's counterargument entirely, a Rogerian arguer would say, "Here's what each of us thinks, and here's what we have in common. How can we proceed forward to honor our shared beliefs but find a new, informed position?" In Fichte's model of *thesis-antithesis-synthesis*,[90] both debaters would pursue synthesis. The author seeks to persuade their audience by showing them respect, demonstrating a willingness to compromise, and championing the validity of truth as one among other valid truths.



The **thesis** is an intellectual proposition.

The **antithesis** is a critical perspective on the thesis.

The **synthesis** solves the conflict between the thesis and antithesis by reconciling their common truths and forming a new proposition.

You can see Rogerian argumentation applied in "Vaccines: Controversies and Miracles."

Exercise 1

Position	Aristotelian	Rogerian
Wool sweaters are the best clothing for cold weather.	Wool sweaters are the best clothing for cold weather because they are fashionable and comfortable. Some people might think that wool sweaters are itchy, but those claims are ill-informed. Wool sweaters can be silky smooth if properly handled in the laundry.	Some people might think that wool sweaters are itchy, which can certainly be the case. I've worn plenty of itchy wool sweaters. But wool sweaters can be silky smooth if properly handled in the laundry; thereforem they are the best clothing for cold weather. If you want to be cozy and in-style, consider my laundry techniques and a fuzzy wool sweater.

> Before moving on, try to identify one rhetorical situation in which Aristotelian argumentation would be most effective, and one in which Rogerian argumentation would be preferable. Neither form is necessarily better, but rather both are useful in specific contexts. In what situations might you favor one approach over another?

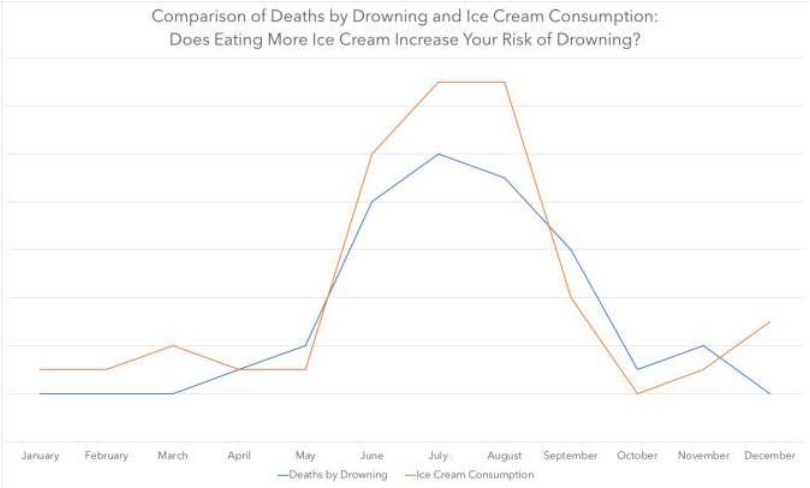
Rhetorical Appeals

Regardless of the style of arguments you use, you will need to consider the ways you engage your audience. Aristotle identified three kinds of **rhetorical appeals: *logos, pathos,*** and ***ethos***. Some instructors refer to this trio as the "rhetorical triangle," though I prefer to think of them as a three-part Venn diagram.[91] The best argumentation engages all three of these appeals, falling in the center where all three overlap. Unbalanced application of rhetorical appeals is likely to leave your audience suspicious, doubtful, or even bored.

Logos

You may have inferred already, but *logos* refers to an appeal to an audience's logical reasoning. *Logos* will often employ statistics, data, or other quantitative facts to demonstrate the validity of an argument. For example, an argument about the wage gap might indicate that women, on average, earn only about 80 percent of the salary that men in comparable positions earn; this would imply a logical conclusion that our economy favors men.

However, stating a fact or statistic does not alone constitute *logos*. For instance, when i show you this graph[92], I am not yet making a logical appeal:



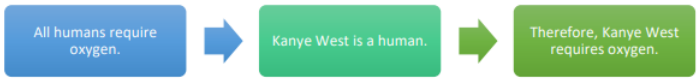
Yes, this graph is "fact-based," drawing on data to illustrate a phenomenon. That characteristic alone, though doesn't make a logical appeal. For my appeal to be logical, I also need to *interpret* the graph here:

As is illustrated here, there is a direct positive correlation between ice cream consumption and deaths by drowning: when people eat more ice cream, more people drown. Therefore, we need to be more careful about waiting 30 minutes after we eat ice cream.

Of course, this conclusion is inaccurate; it is a **logical fallacy** described in the table below called "post hoc, ergo propter hoc." However, the example illustrates that your logic is only complete when you've drawn a logical conclusion from your facts,

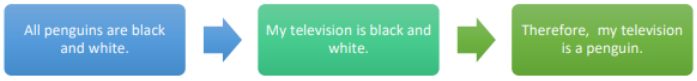
statistics, or other information.

There are many other ways we draw logical conclusions. There are entire branches of academia dedicated to understanding the many kinds of logical reasoning, but we might get a better idea by looking at a specific kind of logic. Let's take for example the logical syllogism, which might look like this:



Pretty straightforward, right? We can see how a general rule (major premise) is applied to a specific situation (minor premise) to develop a logical conclusion. I like to introduce this kind of logic because students sometimes jump straight from the major premise to the conclusion; if you skip the middle step, your logic will be less convincing.

It does get a little more complex. Consider this false syllogism: it follows the same structure (general rule + specific situation), but it reaches an unlikely conclusion.



This is called a **logical fallacy**. Logical fallacies are part of our daily lives. Stereotypes, generalization, and misguided assumptions are fallacies you've likely encountered. You may have heard some terms about fallacies already: red herring, slippery slope, non sequitur. Fallacies follow patterns of reasoning that would otherwise be perfectly acceptable to us, but within their basic structure, they make a mistake. Aristotle identified that fallacies happen on the "material" level (the content is fallacious-something about the ideas or premises is flawed) and the "verbal" level (the writing or speech is fallacious- something about the delivery or medium is flawed).

It's important to be able to recognize these so that you can critically interrogate others' arguments and improve your own.

✔ Here are some of the most common logical fallacies:

Fallacy	Description	Example
Post hoc, ergo propter hoc	"After this, therefore because of this" -a confusion of cause-and-effect with coincidence, attributing a consequence to an unrelated event. This error assumes that correlation equals causation, which is sometimes not the case.	Statistics show that rates of ice cream consumption and deaths by drowning both increased in June. This must mean that ice cream causes drowning.
Non sequitur	"Does not follow" -a random digression that distracts from the train of logic (like a "red herring"), or draws an unrelated logical conclusion. John Oliver calls one manifestation of this fallacy "whataboutism," which he describes as a way to deflect attention from the subject at hand.	Sherlock is great at solving crimes; therefore, he'll also make a great father. Sherlock Holmes smokes a pipe, which is unhealthy. But what about Bill Clinton? He eats McDonald's every day, which is also unhealthy.
Straw Man	An oversimplification or cherry-picking of the opposition's argument to make them easier to attack.	People who oppose the destruction of Confederate monuments are all white supremacists.
Ad hominem	"To the person" - a personal attack on the arguer, rather than a critique of their ideas.	I don't trust Moriarty's opinion on urban planning because he wears bowties.
Slippery Slope	An unreasonable prediction that one event will lead to a related but unlikely series of events that follows.	If we let people of the same sex get married, then people will start marrying their dogs too!
False Dichotomy	A simplification of a complex issue into only two sides.	Given the choice between pizza and Chinese food for dinner, we simply *must* choose Chinese.

Learn more about other logical fallacies in the Additional Recommended Resources appendix.

Pathos

The second rhetorical appeal we'll consider here is perhaps the most common: *pathos* refers to the process of engaging the reader's emotions. (You might recognize the Greek root *pathos* in "sympathy," "empathy," and "pathetic.") A writer can evoke a great variety of emotions to support their argument, from fear, passion, and joy to pity, kinship, and rage. By planning on the audience's feelings, writers can increase the impact of their arguments.

There are two especially effective techniques for cultivating *pathos* that I share with my students:

- Make the audience aware of the issue's relevance to them specifically- "How would you feel if this happened to you? What are we to do about this issue?"
- Tell stories. A story about one person or one community can have a deeper impact than broad, impersonal data or abstract, hypothetical statements. Consider the difference between

    About 1.5 million pets are euthanized each year

    and

    Scooter, an energetic and loving former service dog with curly brown hair like a Brillo pad, was put down yesterday.

Both are impactful, but the latter is more memorable and more specific.

Pathos is ubiquitous in our current journalistic practices because people are more likely to act (or, at least, consume media) when they feel emotionally moved.[93] Consider, as an example, the outpouring of support for detained immigrants in June 2018, reacting to the Trump administration's controversial family separation policy. As stories and images like this one surfaced, millions of dollars were raised in a matter of days on the premise of *pathos*, and resulted in the temporary suspension of that policy.

Ethos

Your argument wouldn't be complete without an appeal to *ethos*. Cultivating *ethos* refers to the means by which you demonstrate your authority or expertise on a topic. You'll have to show your audience that you're trustworthy if they are going to buy your argument.

There are a handful of ways to demonstrate *ethos*:

- By personal experience: Although your lived experience might not set hard-and-fast rules about the world, it is worth noting that you may be an expert on certain facets of your life. For instance, a student who has played rugby for fifteen years of their life is in many ways an authority on the sport.
- By education or other certifications: Professional achievements demonstrate *ethos* by revealing status in a certain field or discipline.
- By citing other experts: The common expression is "Stand on the shoulders of giants." You can develop *ethos* by pointing to other people with authority and saying, "Look, this smart/experience/qualified/important person agrees with me."

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"GovernmentZA President Jacob Zuma attends Indigenous and Traditional Leaders Indaba" by Government ZA is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0

A common misconception is that *ethos* corresponds with "ethics." However, you can remember that *ethos* is about credibility because it shares a root with "authority."

Sociohistorical Context of Argumentation

This textbook has emphasized consideration of your rhetorical occasion, but it bears repeating here that "good" argumentation depends largely on your place in time, space, and culture. Different cultures throughout the world value the elements of argumentation differently, and argument has different purposes in different contexts. The content of your argument *and* your strategies for delievering it will change in every unique rhetorical situation.

Continuing from *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*, the notion of ***kairos*** speaks to this concern. To put it in plain language, *kairos* is the force that determines what will be the best argumentative approach in the moment in which you're arguing; it is closely alligned with rhetorical occasion. According to rhetoricians, the characteristics of the *karios* determine the balance and application of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*.

Moreover, your sociohistorical context will bear on what you an assume of your audience. What can you take for granted that your audience knows and believes? The "common sense" that your audience relies on is always changing: common sense in the U.S. in 1950 was much different from common sense in the U.S. in 1920 or common sense in the U.S. in 2018. You can make assumptions

about your audience's interests, values, and background knowledge, but only with careful consideration of the time and place in which you are arguing.

As an example, let's consider the principle of logical noncontradiction. Put simply, this means that for an argument to be valid, its logical premises must not contradict one another: if A=B, then B=A. If I said that a dog is a mammal and a mammal is an animal, but a dos is not an animal, I would be contradicting myself. Or, "No one drives on I-84; there's too much traffic." This statement contradicts itself, which makes it humorous to us.

However, this principle of non-contradiction is not universal. Our understanding of cause and effect and logical consistency is defined by the millennia of knowledge that has been produced before us, and some cultures value the contradiction rather than perceive it as invalid.[94] This is not to say that either way of seeing the world is more or less accurate, but rather to emphasize that your methods of argumentation depend tremendously on sociohistorical context.

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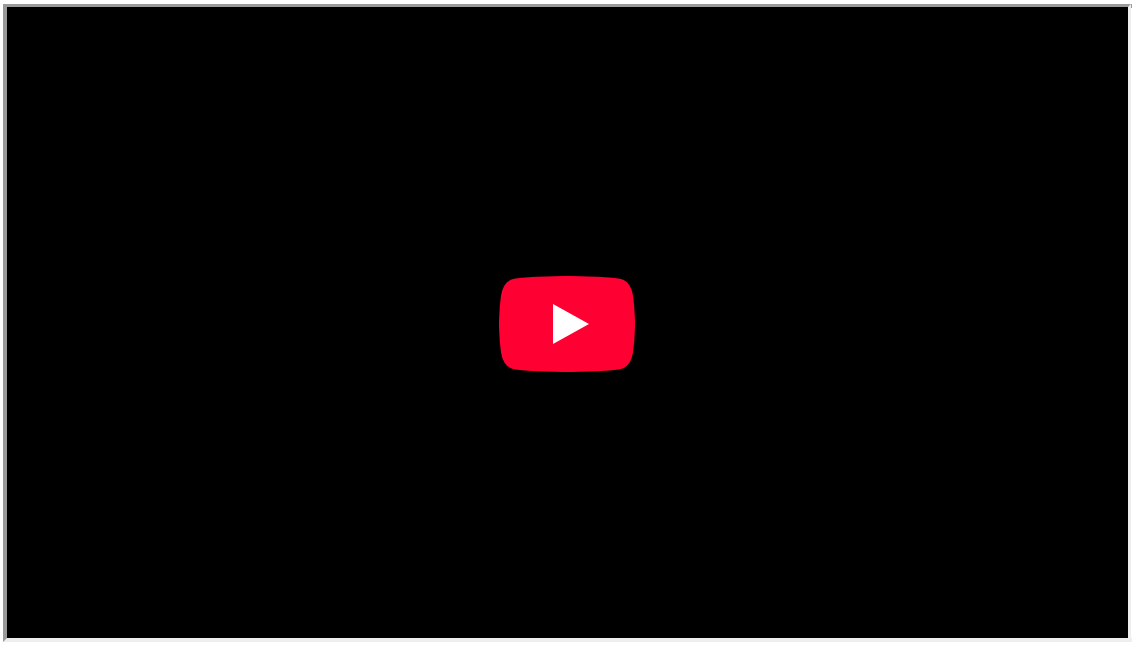
8.3: Avoiding Logical Fallacies

What are Logical Fallacies?

Logical fallacies are errors in reasoning that are based on **poor or faulty logic**. When presented in a formal argument, they can cause you to lose your credibility as a writer, so you have to be careful of them.



Sometimes, writers will purposefully use logical fallacies to make an argument seem more persuasive or valid than it really is. In fact, the examples of fallacies that follow might be examples you have heard or read. While using fallacies might work in some situations, it's irresponsible as a writer, and, chances are, an academic audience will recognize the fallacy.

However, most of the time, students accidentally use logical fallacies in their arguments, so being aware of logical fallacies and understanding what they are can help you avoid them. Plus, being aware of these fallacies can help you recognize them when you are reading and looking for source material. You wouldn't want to use a source as evidence if the author included some faulty logic.

Straw Man Fallacy

A straw man fallacy occurs when someone takes another person's argument or point, distorts it or exaggerates it in some kind of extreme way, and then attacks the extreme distortion, as if that is really the claim the first person is making.

Person 1:

I think pollution from humans contributes to climate change.

Person 2:

So, you think humans are directly responsible for extreme weather, like hurricanes, and have caused the droughts in the southwestern U.S.? If that's the case, maybe we just need to go to the southwest and perform a "rain dance."

False Dilemma Fallacy

Sometimes called the "either-or" fallacy, a false dilemma is a logical fallacy that presents only two options or sides when there are many options or sides. Essentially, a false dilemma presents a "black and white" kind of thinking when there are actually many shades of gray.

Person 1:

You're either for the war or against the troops.

Person 2:

Actually, I do not want our troops sent into a dangerous war.

Hasty Generalization Fallacy

The hasty generalization fallacy is sometimes called the **over-generalization** fallacy. It is basically making a claim based on evidence that it just too small. Essentially, you can't make a claim and say that something is true if you have only an example or two as evidence.

Example:

Some teenagers in our community recently vandalized the park downtown. Teenagers are so irresponsible and destructive.

Appeal to Fear Fallacy

This type of fallacy is one that, as noted in its name, plays upon people's fear. In particular, this fallacy presents a scary future if a certain decision is made today.

Example:

Elizabeth Smith doesn't understand foreign policy. If you elect Elizabeth Smith as president, we will be attacked by terrorists.

Ad Hominem Fallacy

Ad hominem means "against the man," and this type of fallacy is sometimes called **name calling** or the **personal attack** fallacy. This type of fallacy occurs when someone attacks the person instead of attacking his or her argument.

Person 1:

I am for raising the minimum wage in our state.

Person 2:

She is for raising the minimum wage, but she is not smart enough to even run a business.

Slippery Slope Fallacy

A slippery slope fallacy occurs when someone makes a claim about a series of events that would lead to one major event, usually a bad event. In this fallacy, a person makes a claim that one event leads to another event and so on until we come to some awful conclusion. Along the way, each step or event in the faulty logic becomes more and more improbable.

Example:

If we enact any kind of gun control laws, the next thing you know, we won't be allowed to have any guns at all. When that happens, we won't be able to defend ourselves against terrorist attacks, and when that happens terrorists will take over our country. Therefore, gun control laws will cause us to lose our country to terrorists.

Bandwagon Fallacy

The bandwagon fallacy is also sometimes called the **appeal to common belief** or **appeal to the masses** because it's all about getting people to do or think something because "everyone else is doing it" or "everything else thinks this."

Example:

Everyone is going to get the new smart phone when it comes out this weekend. Why aren't you?

Guilt by Association Fallacy

A guilt by association fallacy occurs when someone connects an opponent to a demonized group of people or to a bad person in order to discredit his or her argument. The idea is that the person is "guilty" by simply being similar to this "bad" group and, therefore, should not be listened to about anything.

Example:

We cannot have the educational reform that my opponent calls for because Dr. Crazy has also mentioned this kind of educational reform.

Practice Activity: Logical Fallacies

Additional Resource

https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/

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8.4: Writing for Success- Argument

This section will help you determine the purpose and structure of an argumentative essay.

The Purpose of Argument in Writing

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different. An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.

tip

Most of us feel inclined to try to win the arguments we engage in. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to ***persuade*** your audience to consider your opinion as a valid one, not simply the right one.

The Structure of an Argumentative Essay

The following five features make up the structure of an argumentative essay:

1. Introduction and thesis
2. Opposing and qualifying ideas
3. Strong evidence in support of claim
4. Style and tone of language
5. A compelling conclusion

Creating an Introduction and Thesis

The argumentative essay begins with an engaging introduction that presents the general topic. The thesis typically appears somewhere in the introduction and states the writer's point of view.

tip

Avoid forming a thesis based on a negative claim. For example, "The hourly minimum wage **is not** high enough for the average worker to live on." This is probably a true statement, but arguments should make a positive case that affirms something. Instead of arguing something "**is not**…", an argument essay is stronger when it asserts something "**is**…" Returning to the example above, a stronger thesis could focus on how the hourly wage **is** low or insufficient.

Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

Because an argument implies differing points of view on the subject, you must be sure to acknowledge those opposing ideas. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus it is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.

Try to address opposing arguments earlier rather than later in your essay. Rhetorically speaking, ordering your positive arguments last allows you to better address ideas that conflict with your own, so you can spend the rest of the essay countering those arguments. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else's. You have the last word.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. They know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space.

It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish. In effect, you are conceding early on that your argument is not the ultimate authority on a given topic. Such humility can go a long way toward earning credibility and trust with an audience. Audience members will know from the beginning that you are a reasonable writer, and audience members will trust your argument as a result. For example, in the following concessionary statement, the writer advocates for stricter gun control laws, but she admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

Although tougher gun control laws are a powerful first step in decreasing violence in our streets, such legislation alone cannot end these problems since guns are not the only problem we face.

Such a concession will be welcome by those who might disagree with this writer's argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be modest in their goals and humble in their approach to get readers to listen to the ideas. Certain **transitional words and phrases** aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed here:

Phrases of Concession	
although	granted that
of course	still
though	yet

Bias in Writing

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have a bias toward wearing black instead of brightly colored clothes or wearing jeans rather than formal wear. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view. The ideal in persuasive writing is to let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and a respectful and reasonable address of opposing sides.

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you are apt to put forth and the better the final product will be.

The weakness of bias is when the bias begins to take over the essay—when, for example, you neglect opposing ideas, exaggerate your points, or repeatedly insert yourself ahead of the subject by using Itoo often. Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.

The Use of *I* in Writing

The use of *I* in writing is often a topic of debate, and the acceptance of its usage varies from instructor to instructor. It is difficult to predict the preferences for all your present and future instructors, but consider the effects it can potentially have on your writing.

Be mindful of the use of *I* in your writing because it can make your argument sound overly biased. There are two primary reasons:

- Excessive repetition of any word will eventually catch the reader's attention—and usually not in a good way. The use of *I* is no different.
- The insertion of *I* into a sentence alters not only the way a sentence might sound but also the composition of the sentence itself. *I* is often the subject of a sentence. If the subject of the essay is supposed to be, say, smoking, then by inserting yourself into the sentence, you are effectively displacing the subject of the essay into a secondary position. In the following example, the subject of the sentence is underlined:

Smoking is bad. I think smoking is bad.

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

Developing Sound Arguments

Use the following checklist to develop sound arguments in your essay:

- An engaging introduction

- A reasonable, specific thesis that is able to be supported by evidence
- A varied range of evidence from credible sources
- Respectful acknowledgement and explanation of opposing ideas
- A style and tone of language that is appropriate for the subject and audience
- Acknowledgement of the argument's limits
- A conclusion that will adequately summarize the essay and reinforce the thesis

Fact and Opinion

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

Opinions are personal views, or judgments. An opinion is what an individual believes about a particular subject. However, an opinion in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion. Consider the credibility of expert opinions. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience.

For example, you seek the opinion of your dentist when it comes to the health of your gums, and you seek the opinion of your mechanic when it comes to the maintenance of your car. Both have knowledge and credentials in those respective fields, which is why their opinions matter to you. But the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should he or she offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa.

In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions. Relying on one or the other will likely lose more of your audience than it gains.

The word prove is frequently used in the discussion of argumentative writing. Writers may claim that one piece of evidence or another proves the argument, but proving an argument is often not possible. No evidence proves a debatable topic one way or the other; that is why the topic is debatable. Facts can be proved, but opinions can only be supported, explained, and persuaded.

Using Visual Elements to Strengthen Arguments

Adding visual elements to a persuasive argument can often strengthen its persuasive effect. There are two main types of visual elements: quantitative visuals and qualitative visuals.

Quantitative visuals present data graphically and visually. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience. For example, sometimes it is easier to understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, line graphs and infographics are all ways of presenting quantitative data in visual and/or spatial dimensions.

Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions. Photographs and pictorial images are examples of qualitative visuals. Such images often try to convey a story, and seeing an actual example can carry more power than hearing or reading about the example. For example, one image of a child suffering from malnutrition will likely have more of an emotional impact than pages dedicated to describing that same condition in writing.

Writing an Argumentative Essay

Choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, approach the subject from an angle that interests you. Begin your essay with an engaging introduction. Your thesis should typically appear somewhere in your introduction.

Start by acknowledging and explaining points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. Also state the limits of your argument. This too helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.

Make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be

fully explained and clearly stated.

Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice.

Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis.

✔ Example 8.4.1:

Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States

By Scott McLean

The United States is the only modernized Western nation that does not offer publicly funded health care to all its citizens; the costs of health care for the uninsured in the United States are prohibitive, and the practices of insurance companies are often more interested in profit margins than providing health care. These conditions are incompatible with US ideals and standards, and it is time for the US government to provide universal health care coverage for all its citizens. Like education, health care should be considered a fundamental right of all US citizens, not simply a privilege for the upper and middle classes.

One of the most common arguments against providing universal health care coverage (UHC) is that it will cost too much money. In other words, UHC would raise taxes too much. While providing health care for all US citizens would cost a lot of money for every tax-paying citizen, citizens need to examine exactly how much money it would cost, and more important, how much money is "too much" when it comes to opening up health care for all. Those who have health insurance already pay too much money, and those without coverage are charged unfathomable amounts. The cost of publicly funded health care versus the cost of current insurance premiums is unclear. In fact, some Americans, especially those in lower income brackets, could stand to pay less than their current premiums.

However, even if UHC would cost Americans a bit more money each year, we ought to reflect on what type of country we would like to live in, and what types of morals we represent if we are more willing to deny health care to others on the basis of saving a couple hundred dollars per year. In a system that privileges capitalism and rugged individualism, little room remains for compassion and love. It is time that Americans realize the amorality of US hospitals forced to turn away the sick and poor. UHC is a health care system that aligns more closely with the core values that so many Americans espouse and respect, and it is time to realize its potential.

Another common argument against UHC in the United States is that other comparable national health care systems, like that of England, France, or Canada, are bankrupt or rife with problems. UHC opponents claim that sick patients in these countries often wait in long lines or long wait lists for basic health care. Opponents also commonly accuse these systems of being unable to pay for themselves, racking up huge deficits year after year. A fair amount of truth lies in these claims, but Americans must remember to put those problems in context with the problems of the current US system as well. It is true that people often wait to see a doctor in countries with UHC, but we in the United States wait as well, and we often schedule appointments weeks in advance, only to have onerous waits in the doctor's "waiting rooms."

Critical and urgent care abroad is always treated urgently, much the same as it is treated in the United States. The main difference there, however, is cost. Even health insurance policy holders are not safe from the costs of health care in the United States. Each day an American acquires a form of cancer, and the only effective treatment might be considered "experimental" by an insurance company and thus is not covered. Without medical coverage, the patient must pay for the treatment out of pocket. But these costs may be so prohibitive that the patient will either opt for a less effective, but covered, treatment; opt for no treatment at all; or attempt to pay the costs of treatment and experience unimaginable financial consequences. Medical bills in these cases can easily rise into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, which is enough to force even wealthy families out of their homes and into perpetual debt. Even though each American could someday face this unfortunate situation, many still choose to take the financial risk. Instead of gambling with health and financial welfare, US citizens should press their representatives to set up UHC, where their coverage will be guaranteed and affordable.

Despite the opponents' claims against UHC, a universal system will save lives and encourage the health of all Americans. Why has public education been so easily accepted, but not public health care? It is time for Americans to start thinking socially about health in the same ways they think about education and police services: as rights of US citizens.

key takeaways

- The purpose of argument in writing is to convince or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion.
- An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue, in writing, is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way.
- A thesis that expresses the opinion of the writer in more specific terms is better than one that is vague.
- It is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.
- It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish through a concession statement.
- To persuade a skeptical audience, you will need to use a wide range of evidence. Scientific studies, opinions from experts, historical precedent, statistics, personal anecdotes, and current events are all types of evidence that you might use in explaining your point.
- Make sure that your word choice and writing style is appropriate for both your subject and your audience.
- You should let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and respectfully and reasonably addressing opposing ideas.
- You should be mindful of the use of I in your writing because it can make your argument sound more biased than it needs to.
- Facts are statements that can be proven using objective data.
- Opinions are personal views, or judgments, that cannot be proven.
- In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions.
- Quantitative visuals present data graphically. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience.
- Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions.

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8.5: Activities

Activities

Op-Ed Rhetorical Analysis

One form of direct argumentation that is readily available is the opinion editorial, or op-ed. Most news sources, from local to international, include an opinion section. Sometimes, these pieces are written by members of the news staff; sometimes, they're by contributors or community members. Op-eds can be long (e.g., a brief statement of one's viewpoint, like in your local newspaper's Letter to the Editor section).

Exercise 1

To get a better idea of how authors incorporate rhetorical appeals, complete the following rhetorical analysis exercise on an op-ed of your choosing.

1) Find an op-ed (opinion piece, editorial, or letter to the editor) from either a local newspaper, a national new source, or an international news corporation. Choose something that interests you, since you'll have to read it a few times over.

2) Read the op-ed through once, annotating parts that are particularly convincing, points that seem unsubstantiated, or other eye-catching details.

3) Briefly (in one to two sentences) identify the rhetorical situation (SOAP) of the op-ed.

4) Write a citation for the op-ed in an appropriate format.

5) Analyze the application of rhetoric.

a. Summarize the issue at stake and the author's position.

b. Find a quote that represents an instance of *logos*.

c. Find a quote that represents an instance of *pathos*.

d. Find a quote that represents an instance of *ethos*.

e. Paraphrase the author's **call-to-action** (the action or actions the author wants the audience to take). A call-to-action will often be related to an author's rhetorical purpose.

6) In a one-paragraph response, consider: Is this rhetoric effective? Does it fulfill its purpose? Why or why not?

VICE News Rhetorical Appeal Analysis

VICE News, an alternative investigatory news outlet, has recently gained acclaim for its inquiry-driven reporting on current issues and popular appeal, much of which is derived from effective application of rhetorical appeals.

You can complete the follwing activity using any of their texts, but I recommend "State of Surveillance" from June 8, 2016. Take notes while you watch and complete the organizer on the following pages after you finish.

Exercise 2

What is the title and publication date of the text?

Briefly summarize the subject of this text.

How would you describe the purpose of this text?

https://human.libretexts.org/@go/page/271619

Pathos	Provide at least 3 examples of *pathos* that you observed in the text:	How would you describe the overall tone of the piece? What mood does it evoke for the viewer/reader?
Logos	Provide at least 3 examples of *logos* that you observed in the text:	In addition to presenting data and statistics, how does the text logically interpret evidence?
Ethos	Provide at least 3 examples of *ethos* that you observed in the text:	How might one person, idea, or source both enhance and detract from the cultivation of *ethos*? (Consider Edward Snowden in "State of Surveillance," for instance.)

Audience Analysis: Tailoring Your Appeals

Now that you've observed the end result of rhetorical appeals, let's consider how you might tailor your own rhetorical appeals based on your audience.

First, come up with a claim that you might try to persuade an audience to believe. Then, consider how you might develop this claim based on the potential audiences listed in the organizer on the following pages. An example is provided after the empty organizer if you get stuck.

Exercise 3

Claim:

Audience #1: Business owners	What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?
Logos	
Pathos	
Ethos	
Audience #2: Local political officials	**What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?**
Logos	
Pathos	
Ethos	

Audience #3: One of your family members	What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?
Logos	
Pathos	
Ethos	
Audience #4: Invent your own	**What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?**
Logos	
Pathos	
Ethos	

Example 1

Model

Claim:	Employers should offer employees discounted or free public transit passes.
Audience #1: Business owners	What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?
Logos	They are concerned with profit margins – I need to show that this will benefit them financially: "If employees are able to access transportation more reliably, then they are more likely to arrive on time, which increases efficiency."
Pathos	They are concerned with employee morale – I need to show that access will improve employee satisfaction: "Every employer wants their employees to feel welcome at the office. Does your work family dread the start of the day?"
Ethos	They are more likely to believe my claim if other business owners, the chamber of commerce, etc., back it up: "In 2010, Portland employer X started providing free bus passes, and their employee retention rate has increased 30%."
Audience #2: Local political officials	What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?
Logos	They are held up by political bureaucracy – I need to show a clear, direct path to executing my claim: "The implementation of such a program could be modeled after an existing system, like EBT cards."

Pathos	They are concerned with reelection – I need to show that this will build an enthusiastic voter base: "When politicians show concern for workers, their approval rates increase. If the voters are happy, you'll be happy!"
Ethos	They are more likely to believe my claim if I show other cities and their political officials executing a similar plan – I could also draw on my own experiences because I am a member of the community they represent: "As an employee who uses public transit (and an enthusiastic voter), I can say that I would make good use of this benefit."
Audience #3: One of your family members	What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?
Logos	My mom has to drive all over the state for her job – I could explain how this will benefit her: "If you had a free or discounted pass, you could drive less. Less time behind the wheel means a reduction of risk!"
Pathos	My mom has to drive all over the state for her job – I could tap into her frustration: "Aren't you sick of a long commute bookending each day of work? The burning red glow of brakelights and the screech of tires—it doesn't have to be this way."
Ethos	My mom might take my word for it since she trusts me already: "Would I mislead you? I hate to say I told you so, but I was totally right about the wool sweater thing."

Audience #4: Invent your own Car drivers	What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?
Logos	They are concerned with car-related expenses – I need to lay out evidence of savings from public transit: "Have you realized that taking the bus two days a week could save you $120 in gas per month?"
Pathos	They are frustrated by traffic, parking, etc. – I could play to that emotion: "Is that a spot? No. Is that a spot? No. Oh, but th—No. Sound familiar? You wouldn't have to hear this if there were an alternative.
Ethos	Maybe testimonies from former drivers who use public transit more often would be convincing: "In a survey of PSU students who switched from driving to public transit, 65% said they were not only confident in their choice, but that they were much happier as a result!"

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8.6: Model Texts by Student Authors

Model Texts by Student Authors

Effective Therapy Through Dance and Movement[95]

Two chairs, angled slightly away from one another, a small coffee table positioned between them, and an ominous bookshelf behind them, stocked with thick textbooks about psychodynamic theory, Sigmund Freud, and of course, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This is a psychoanalytic psychotherapists's typical clinical set-up. Walking into the room, your entire body feels tense- rigid with stress as you enter the therapist's office only to find the aforementioned sight. Your heartbeat reverberates throughout your body, your throat tightens ever-so-slightly, and your mouth goes dry as an overwhelming sense of nervousness sets in.

Now, imagine instead walking into a beautiful studio, wearing your most comfortable clothing. You take off your shoes, and put your hands in the pockets of your sweatpants as you begin to slip and slide around the sprung hardwood floor whilst a childish smile creeps across your face. Your therapist is not there necessarily to dissect your personality or interpret your behavior, but instead to encourage your mental and physical exploration, leading you on a journey of self-discovery. This is the warm and encouraging environment that dance/movement therapy (DMT) may take place in.

In its essence, DMT is the therapeutic use of physical movement- specifically dance in this context- to encourage and support emotional, intellectual, and motor functions of the mind and body. The focus of the therapy lies within the connection and correlation between movement and emotion ("About"). Unlike so-called "normal" therapies, which are set in a clinical environment, and are conducted by somebody with an extensive background in psychology, DMT is generally practiced by individuals whose background is primarily in dance and the performing arts, with psychology or psychotherapy education falling second. Although some may argue otherwise, I believe that DMT is a viable form of therapy, and that dance and movement can act as the catalyst for profound mental transformation; therefore, when dance and therapy are combined, they create a powerful platform for introspection along with interpersonal discovery, and mental/ behavioral change.

Life begins with movement and breathing; they precede all thought and language. Following movement and breath, gesture falls next in the development of personal communication and understanding (Chaiklin 3). Infants and toddlers learn to convey their wants and needs via pointing, yelling, crying, clapping. As adults, we don't always understand what it is they're trying to tell us; however, we know that their body language is intended to communicate something important. As a child grows older, a greater emphasis is place on verbally communicating their wants and needs, and letting go of the physical expression. Furthermore, the childish means of demonstrating wants and needs become socially inappropriate as one matures. Perhaps we should not ignore the impulses to cry, to yell, or to throw a tantrum on the floor, but instead encourage a channeled physical release of pent-up energy.

I personally, would encourage what some would consider as emotional breakdowns within a therapeutic setting. For example, screaming, sobbing, pounding one's fists against the floor, or kicking a wall all seem taboo in our society, especially when somebody is above the age of three. There is potential for said expressions to become violent and do more harm than good for a client. Therefore, I propose using dance and movement as a method of expressing the same intense emotions.

As a dancer myself, I can personally attest to the benefits of emotional release through movement. I am able to do my best thinking when I am dancing, and immediately after I stop. When dancing, whether it is improvised movement or learned choreography, the body is in both physical and mental motion, as many parts of the brain are activiated. The cerebrum is working in overdrive to allow the body to perform certain actions, while other areas of the brain like the cerebellum are trying to match your breathing and oxygen intake to your level of physical exertion. In addition, all parts of the limbic system are triggered. The limbic system is comprised of multiple parts of the brain including the amygdala, hippocampus, thalamus, and hypothalamus. These different areas of the brain are responsible for emotional arousal, certain aspects of memory, and the willingness to be affected by external stimuli. So, when they are activated with movement, they encourage the endocrine system- specifically the pituitary gland- to release hormones that make you feel good about yourself, how you are moving, and allow you to understand what emotions you're feeling and experiencing (Kinser).

As a form of exercise as well, dancing releases endorphins- proteins that are synthesized by the pituitary gland in response to physiologic stressors. This feeling is so desirable that opioid medications were created with the intent of mimicking the sensation

that accompanies an endorphin rush (Sprouse-Blum 70). Along with the beta-proteins comes a level of mental clarity, and a sense of calm. Dance movement therapists should utilize this feeling within therapy, allowing participants to make sense of crises in their life as they exist in this heightened state.

Similar to the potential energy that is explored in physics, when set to music, physical movement manifests a mental state that allows for extensive exploration and introspective discovery. DMT is effect as a therapy in that it allows clients to manifest and confront deep psychological issues while existing in a state of nirvana- the result of dance. Essentially, DMT allows the participant to feel good about him or herself during the sessions, and be open and receptive to learning about their patterns of though, and any maladaptive behavior ("About").

Playing specifically to this idea of finding comfort through one's one body, a case study was done involving an adolescent girl (referred to as "Alex") who struggled with acute body dysmorphic disorder- a mental illness whose victims are subject to obsession with perceived flaws in their appearance. The aim of the study was to examine "the relationship between an adolescent female's overall wellness, defined by quality of life, and her participation in a dance/movement therapy [DMT]-based holistic wellness curriculum" (Hagensen 150). During the six-week-long data-collection and observation period, Alex's sessions took place in a private psychotherapy office and included normal dance and movement based therapy, along with a learning curriculum that focused on mindfulness, body image, movement, friendships, and nutrition. Her therapist wanted not only to ensure that Alex receive the necessary DMT to overcome her body dysmorphic disorder, but also to equip her with tools to better combat it in the future, should it resurface.

In total, the case study lasted four months, and included nine individual therapy sessions, and a handful of parental check-in meetings (to get their input on her progress). Using the Youth Quality of Life-Research Version (YQOL-R) and parent surveys, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected that revealed that Alex did indeed learn more about herself, and how her body and mind function together. The psychologists involved concluded that the use of DMT was appropriate for Alex's case, and it proved to be effective in transforming her distorted image of herself (Hagensen 168).

Some may dispute this evidence by saying that the case of a single adolescent girl is not sufficient to deem DMT effective; however, it is extremely difficult to limit confounding variable in large-scale therapeutic experiments. In the realm of psychology, individual studies provide data that is just as important as that of bigger experiments. To further demonstrate DMT's effectiveness on a larger scale though, I turn to a study that was conducted in Germany in 2012 for evidence.

After recruiting 17 dance therapists and randomly selecting 162 participants, a study was conducted to test the efficacy of a 10-week long DMT group and whether or not the quality of life (QOL) of the participants improved. Ninety-seven of the participants were randomly assigned to the therapy group (the experimental group), whilst the remaining 65 were placed on a waitlist, meaning they did not receive any treatment (the control group) (Bräuninger 296). All of the participants suffered from stress and felt that they needed professional help dealing with it. The study utilized a subject-design, and included a pre-test, post-test, and six-month follow-up test. As hypothesized, the results demonstrated that participants in the experimental DMT group significantly improved the QOL, both in the short term (right after the sessions terminated) and in the long term (at the six-month follow-up). The greatest QOL improvements were in the areas of psychological well-being and general life in both the short- and long- term. At the end of the study, it was concluded that, "Dance movement therapy significantly improves QOL in the short and long term" (Bräuninger 301).

DMT does prove to be an effective means of therapy in the cases of body dysmorphic disorder and stress; however, when it comes to using DMT in the treatment of schizophrenia, it seems to fall short. In an attempt to speak to the effectiveness of dance therapy in the context of severe mental illness and disorders, a group of psychologists conducted a study to "evaluate the effects of dance therapy for people with schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like illnesses compared with standard care and other interventions" (Xia 675). Although DMT did not do any harm, there was no identifiable reduction in the participant's symptoms, nor was there an overall improvement in mental cognition. It was concluded that the results of the study did not affirm nor deny the use of dance/movement therapy amongst the group of schizophrenic participants (Xia 676).

I believe that the aforementioned case study brings to light something key about DMT: the kinds of people and mental illnesses that it can be successful for. As demonstrated by the study conducted on schizophrenic patients, DMT isn't necessarily effective for the entire spectrum of mental illnesses. DMT has been shown to more effective for those dealing with less serious mental illnesses, or are simply struggling to cope with passing crises in their life. For example, problems with stress, self-image, family, time

management, and relationships are ideal issues to deal with in a DMT setting (Payne 14). Studies have shown that these are the most successfully resolved personal conflicts in this therapy.

Although DMT may not be an effective treatment for certain people or problems, it is unlikely that it will cause detriment to patients, unlike other therapies. For example, it is very common for patients in traditional verbal therapy to feel intense and strong emotions that they were not prepared to encounter, and therefore, not equipped to handle. They can have an increased anxiety and anxiousness as a result of verbal therapy, and even potentially manifest and endure false memories (Linden 308). When a client is difficult to get talking, therapists will inquire for information and ask thought-provoking questions to initiate conversation or better develop their understanding of a patient's situation. In some cases, this has been shown to encourage the development of false memories because the therapist is overbearing and trying too hard to evoke reactions from their reluctant clients. These negative side effects of therapy may also manifest themselves in DMT; however, this is very unlikely given the holistic nature of the therapy, and the compassionate role of the therapist.

Along with its positive effects on participants, another attribute to the utilization of DMT is that a holistic curriculum may be easily interwoven and incorporated alongside the standard therapy. Instead of participation only in standard therapy sessions, a therapist can also act as a teacher. By helping participants learn about mindfulness and introspection techniques, along with equipping them with coping skills, the therapist/teacher is able to help their clients learn how to combat problems they may face in the future, after therapy has ended. Like in the case of Alex, it is helpful to learn not just thinking and behavioral patterns, but what they mean, and techniques to keep them in check.

A holistic curriculum is based on "the premise that each person find identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to spiritual values such as compassion and peace" (Miller). In other words, when instilled in the context of DMT, participants learn not only about themselves, but also about their interactions with others and the natural world. Although some find such a premise to be too free-spirited for them, the previously mentioned connections are arguably some of the most important one's in an individual's life. Many people place too great of an emphasis on being happy, and finding happiness, but choose to ignore the introspective process of examining their relationships. By combining DMT and a holistic curriculum, one can truly begin to understand how they function cognitively, what effect that has on their personal relationships, and what their personal role is in a society and in the world.

Finally, DMT is simply more practical and fun than other, more conventional forms of therapy. It is in essence the vitamin C you would take to not just help you get over a cold, but that you would take to help prevent a cold. In contrast, other therapy styles act as the antibiotics you would take once an infection has set in- there are no preventative measures. When most people make the decision to attend therapy, it is because all else has failed and speaking with a therapist is their last resort. Since DMT is a much more relaxed and natural style of therapy, learned exercise and techniques can easily be incorporated into daily life. While most people won't keep a journal of their dreams, or record every instance in the day they've felt anxious (as many clinical therapists would advise), it would be practical to attend a dance class once a week or so. Just by being in class, learning choreography and allowing the body to move, one can lose and discover themself all at the same time. DMT can be as simple as just improvising movement to a song and allowing the mind to be free for a fleeting moment (Eddy 6). And although short, it can still provide enough time to calm the psyche and encourage distinct movements of introspection.

DMT is an extremely underrated area of psychology. With that being said, I also believe it can be a powerful form of therapy and it has been shown to greatly improve participants' quality of life and their outlook on it. As demonstrated by the previous case studies and experiments, DMT allows clients to think critically about their own issues and maladaptive behaviors, and become capable of introspection. Although DMT may not be effective for all mental illnesses, it is still nonetheless a powerful tool for significant psychological change, and should be used far more often as a form of treatment. Instead of instantly jumping to the conclusion that traditional psychotherapy is the best option for all clients, patients, and therapists alike should perhaps recognize that the most natural thing to our body-movement- could act as the basis for interpersonal discovery and provide impressive levels of mental clarity.

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Teacher Takeaways

"This is a good example of Rogerian argument. Rather than taking a confrontational position that might alienate those who disagree, the author acknowledges the grounds for disagreement while explaining why opponents' concerns may be misplaced. Logos and ethos are both successfully employed in that process. However, the use of pathos is largely limited to the first two paragraphs, where the reader is invited to imagine two radically different therapy scenarios. That works well, but using pathos more broadly might vary the tone of the essay and engage the reader more directly in the argument."

– Professor Dunham

We Don't Care About Child Slaves[96]

When you walk into the mall or any department store, your main goal is to snatch a deal, right? You scout for the prettiest dress with the lowest price or the best fitting jeans with the biggest discount. And once you find it, you go to the checkout and purchase it right away. Congratulations- now it's all yours! But here's the thing: the item that you just purchased could have possibly been made from the sweat, blood, and tears of as six-year-old child in Vietnam. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), one in ten Vietnamese children aged 5 to 17 are slave workers, and Vietnam is the second biggest source of imported goods to the U.S. This means that a lot of the things we get from Target, Walmart, and countless other stores are made by child slaves. The problem is that the bargain on that cute shirt we just go was too good for us to think twice- about where it came from, how it was made. As a society, we need to take action against child labor by being conscious of where we buy our goods so we don't feed the system that exploits children.

When we think of child slavery, we are horrified by it. How can someone treat children in such a way? It's horrific, it's terrible, and it's a serious crime! But then again, those shoes you saw in the store are so cute and are at such a cheap price, you must buy them! Even if they were made by child slaves, you can't do anything about that situation and purchasing them won't do any harm at all, right? The unfortunate reality is that we are all hypocritical when it comes to this issue. I'm pretty sure that all of us have some sort of knowledge of child slave workers in third-world countries, but how come we never take into consideration when we but stuff?

Maybe it's because you believe your actions as one person are too little to affect anything, or you just can't pass up that deal. Either way, we need to all start doing research about where we are sending our money.

As of 2014, 1.75 million Vietnamese children are working in conditions that are classified as child labor as child labor according to the ILO (Rau). Most of these children work in crowded factories and work more than 42 hours a week. These children are the ones who make your clothes, toys, and other knick-knacks that you get from Target, Walmart, etc. If not that, they're the ones who make the zippers on your coats and buttons on your sweater in a horrifying, physically unstable work environment.

How exactly do these children end up in this situation? According to a BBC report, labor traffickers specifically target children in remote and poor villages, offering to take them to the city to teach them vocational training or technical skills. Their parents usually agree because they are not aware of the concept of human trafficking since they live in an isolated area. Also, it gives the family an extra source of income. The children are then sent to other places and are forced to work in mostly farms or factories. These children receive little to no pay and most of the time get beaten if they made a mistake while working. They are also subject to mental abuse and at the worst, physically tortured by their boss. Another reason why children end up in the labor force is because they must provide for their family; their parents are unable to do so for whatever reason (Brown).

In 2013, BBC uncovered the story of a Vietnamese child labor victim identified as "Hieu." Hieu was a slave worker in Ho Chi Minh city who jumped out of the third floor window of a factory with two other boy to escape his "workplace." Aged 16 at the time, Hieu explained that a woman approached him in his rural village in Dien Bien, the country's poorest province, and offered him vocational training in the city. He and 11 other children were then sent to the city and forced to make clothes for a garment factory in a cramped room for the next two years. "We started at 6AM and finished work at midnight," he said. "If we made a mistake making the clothes they would beat us with a stick." Fortunately for Hieu, he managed to escape and is one of the 230 children saved by The Blue Dragon Foundation, a charity that helps fight against child labor (Brown).

For the rest of the victims, however, hope is yet to be found. According to the US Department of Commerce, most of the apparel that is sold in the US is made overseas, and Vietnam is the second biggest source for imported goods right behind China. Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka are also on the list of the top sources of US apparel imports. This means that the demand for goods from these countries is high; therefore, the need for child slave workers is increasing.

One of the biggest corporations in the world that has an ongoing history of the use of child slaves is Nike. According to IHSCS News, workers at Vietnam shoe manufacturing plants make 20 cents an hour, are beaten by supervisors, and are not allowed to leave their work posts. Vietnam isn't the only place that has factories with dangerous working conditions owned by the athletic-wear giant (Wilsey). Nike also has sweatshops in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, and China, just to name a few, that have all been investigated by officials due to inhumane working conditions. Everything from clothing and shoes, to soccer balls are potentially made by child slaves in these countries (Greenhouse). Please keep this in mind the next time you visit your local Nike store.

Vietnam has actually been praised for its efforts in combating child slave issues. According to The Borgen Project, Vietnam has increased the number of prosecutions it holds to help end overseas gang activity (Rau). However, the country lacks internal control in child trafficking, and traffickers who are caught receive light punishments. The person who trafficked Hieu and 11 other children only faced a fine of $500 and his factory was closed down, but he did not go to court (Brown).

Let's be real: doing our part to fight against child labor as members of a capitalistic society is not the easiest thing to do. We are all humans who have needs and our constant demand to buy is hard to resist, especially when our society is fueled by consumerism. However, big changes takes little steps. We can start to combat this issue by doing research on where we spend our money and try to not support corporations and companies that will enable the child labor system. We can also donate to charities, such as The Blue Dragon Foundation, to further help the cause. Yes, it is hard to not shop at your favorite stores and I can't stop you from doing so. But all I ask is that you educate yourself on where you are spending your money, and hopefully your moral compass will guide you onto the right path. If you are horrified by the thought of a 5-year-old child being beaten and working 24 hours a day, do not be a part of the problem. Keep Hieu- and the other 1.75 million children who are currently suffering in Vietnam- in mind the next time you buy something.

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Teacher Takeaways

“This essay provides compelling information from credible sources and offers a mix of strategies, including anecdotal examples and more objective statistical information. These approaches complement each other by putting a human face to the problem while also demonstrating its extent and severity. I’d like to see better engagement with the opposing positions, though. It seems likely that many people are not aware of this issue, or are not aware of resources that would help them become more ethical consumers. By failing to anticipate the needs of the audience, the author risks frustrating or alienating readers rather than persuading them.”

– Professor Dunham

Carnivore Consumption Killing Climate[97]

The year of 1955 was the year of many revolutionary names: you might remember the rise of Elvis or the valor of Rosa Parks that year. Some might recognize it as the birth year of two of the 20th centuries best and brightest: Mr. Jobs, and Mr. Gates. However, I recognize it as the birth year of a pair even brighter than that of Steve and Bill. A pair of golden arches that is: McDonald's was founded April 15, 1955, and ever since then, the market for fast, greasy, and cheap food has been a staple in many countries around the world. Which has led to a steady rise in the consumption of meat and other animal products. This spells out disaster for not only personal health but the health of the environment. The direct link between the consumption of animal products and global warming is negatively effecting the health of this generation. If action isn't taken by each of us, global warming will be hazardous for future generations who will be left with the burden of reversing the wastefulness of their greedy ancestors.

While there are many industries that contribute to global warming, the food and farming industry has one of the largest impacts on the environment. For starters, every step of the process, from birth of the calf to the burger patty sizzling on the grill, produces near irreversible damage to the environment. All livestock, not only cows, passively contribute to global warming. "Livestock, especially cattle, produces methane (CH_4) as part of their digestion. This process is called enteric fermentation, and it represents almost one third of the emissions from the Agriculture sector" ("Greenhouse"). While this may seem insignificant to nice small farms with only a few cows, large corporations own thousands of cattle, all of which add up to significant amount of enteric fermentation. Not to mention, the thousands of gallons of gas that goes into transporting the cows and there are tons of coal or fossil fuels being burned to power big warehouses where cows and other various meat-producing animals are crammed into undersized cages, where they are modified and bred for slaughter.

Moreover, the driving of semis release carbon dioxide into the air. These trucks are used to haul the animals, their feed, and the final product, your food. The final number of trips, when all said and done, adds up to an enormous amount of gas being burned. "When we burn fossil fuels, such as coal and gas, we release carbon dioxide (CO_2). CO_2 builds up in the atmosphere and causes Earth's temperature to rise" ("Climate"). In summary, the burning of gas and other fossil fuels in one major way the meat, and the entire food industry contributes to global warming. The rising of the earth's temperature is like the flick of the first domino in the line. Heating of the Earth being the first domino leading to melting the ice caps and so on. Everyone has head the spiel of melting ice caps and "saving the polar bears!"; however, there are many serious and harmful effects of such CO_2 emissions. Some may rebuttal that "global warming doesn't have any effect on me", but there is a list of health problems caused by global warming that do negatively impact humans.

Unless people can come together and reduce, not just their CO_2 footprint, but all greenhouse gas emissions there will continue to be an increase medical problems globally. The rising temperatures is causing longer allergy seasons and an increase in allergens or

dust, pollen and other particles in the air. "Research studies associate fine particles [allergens] with negative cardiovascular outcomes such as heart attacks, formation of deep vein blood clots, and increased mortality from several other causes. These adverse health impacts intensify as temperatures rise" (Portier 14). For further explanation, polluting the atmosphere by burning gas and raising mass numbers of livestock is causing the global temperature to rise. These negative health issues are only the outcome of global warming. I have purposely omitted the health problems, though many, of eating red meat. Cutting meat out of your diet will improve your individual health, but more importantly, it will improve the health of the earth. Some critics might argue that eating just one burger can't raise the entire Earth's temperature. The simple answer is, it doesn't. However, making the conscious decision to eat meat on a day to day basis adds up to a slew of health problems accompanied by a large personal carbon footprint.

Acidification of the oceans is one of the harmful effects on the environment caused by an inflated carbon footprint. This happens when the CO_2 that is released into the atmosphere, absorbs into the ocean, thus leading to a change in the pH level of the ocean. "High concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere increase the amount that is dissolved into the ocean, leading to acidification... many [people on coastal regions] depend on marine protein for daily subsistence, the consequences of perturbing delicate ocean and coastal systems will be far-reaching" (Portier 6). This is problematic for any who live on coastal regions and may rely heavily on seafood in their diet but is also a problem for the fish as well. Disrupting an entire food chain could have many unforeseen consequences.

Meat loves will interject: "well food other than meat is produced in factories, don't contribute to global warming too?" These arguments are not invalid; while the meat industry may cause much of the food and agriculture's emissions, other methods of food production are outdated and harmful as well. The problem of global warming, is not solely the fault of the meat industry, the blame should be put onto anyone who produces more than their fair share of greenhouse gases. For example, the way rice is cultivated could very well be a place CO_2 emissions could be cut. "A change in rice processing and consumption patterns could reduce CO_2 emission by 2-16%" (Norton 42). The implementation made to reduce the footprint of rice cultivation, could then be remodeled to be effectively used to reduce the pollution of the food and agriculture sector as a whole.

However, more simple things than changing the way food is produced can help save the environment. It can be as simple as picking up a piece of litter off the ground to deciding to recycle all your bottles and cans. But for those looking to make a greater contribution to saving the world, stop eating meat. Or, if that is too difficult, reduce the amount of meat you eat. A paper published by the World Resources Institute "showed that reducing heavy red meat consumption, would lead to a per capita food and land use-related greenhouse gas emissions reduction of between 15 and 35 percent by 2050. Going vegetarian could reduce those per capita emissions by half" (Magil). As a vegetarian I gave up eating meat mainly for this reason. But not only can you save the environment by giving up meat, by doing so you can save more than just your life, but millions of lives; "switching to vegetarianism could help prevent nearly 7m premature deaths and help reduce health care costs by $1b" (Harvey). As mentioned, there are multiple positive impacts of eliminating meat from your diet, and it is the best way to reduce your carbon footprint. In tandem, being aware of your carbon footprint is very important, because not monitoring individual emissions is causing greenhouse gases to reach dangerous levels. Which is beginning to cause a variety of health problems for many people which will only intensify if nothing is done on a personal and global level.

Not only do we have to worry about the changes to ocean and costal life, but life everywhere will get far worse if nothing is done to stop the warming of our planet. A world dominated by scientifically advanced greedy carnivores is not a world worth saving. The earth is on a slippery slope that is leading to extinction. The way we consume animal products is irresponsible because it poses a major threat to the environment and endangers humans. To respond to this, we need to develop new ways to combat ecological problems and change wasteful consumption habits. If we cannot stop our polluting and wasteful ways, we are destined to lose the planet that harbors everything we know.

To change the eating habits of an entire nation might be a feat all its own; changing the eating habits of an entire world seems impossible. I am confident that it all starts with one person making the right choice. I urge you to follow not only in my footsteps, but join the millions of others who are putting down their steak knives to fight climate change. I find it horrifying that some people would rather destroy their own race than change what goes on their plate. There is overwhelming evidence that illuminates the fiery connection between global warming and serious health problems. Now this generation and future generations will need to create regulations and invent new solutions to enjoy the same planet we have all called home.

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Teacher Takeaways

“This essay is a good example of an Aristotelian argument; the author clearly presents their stance and their desired purpose, supporting both with a blend of logos, pathos, *and* ethos. *It’s clear that the author is passionate and knowledgeable. I would say as a meat-eater, though, that many readers would feel attacked by some of the rhetorical figures included here: no one wants to be part of the group of ‘scientifically advanced greedy carnivores’ that will make our world uninhabitable, regardless of the truth of that statement. Additionally, the author seems to lose track of their thesis throughout paragraphs four and five. I would encourage them to make sure every paragraph begins and ends with a connection to the thesis statement.”*

– Professor Dawson

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Entering the Conversation- Your Research Process

Now you know about the basic writing process. Let's learn more about research, which kicks your writing up to a new level. Research is not used in all academic or school or college writing. And you will find that on a job, the writing assigned to you will not often say: do research in databases. But you must read to get information, for many writing assignments.

All writing requires you to know your stuff, and that is research.

9.1: Researching a writing assignment
9.2: Introduction
9.3: Sources
9.4: Techniques
9.5: Evaluating Source Credibility
9.6: Finding sources- Academic databases
9.7: Reading sources
9.8: Using sources
9.9: Citing sources
9.10: Review- Basic citation styles
9.11: Model Texts by Student Authors

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9.1: Researching a writing assignment

Research in Academic Writing

In this book, we focus on incorporating research into academic writing. Doing research means using external support for your arguments, typically through logic or data, which are widely recognized as reliable forms of proof. This data is obtained through the rigorous and time-tested scientific method.

Argumentative writing and academic subjects often require research. In contrast, genres like memoirs, poems, or opinion pieces usually need little to no research. The amount of research you need will depend on your audience and the nature of your assignment.

Understanding Your Assignment

When you receive a writing assignment, the requirements may vary. For instance:

- **Specific Academic Topic**: "Write a 5-6 page essay describing the purposes of Benjamin Franklin's various trips to Europe before the American Revolution and their effects on the Revolution itself."
- **Personal Reflection**: "Write about a misconception others have about you and why they're wrong."
- **Workplace Task**: "Write a report explaining what the IT department has been up to in the past year."
- **Broader Assignment**: "Write an argumentative essay that effectively utilizes ethos, pathos, and logos, along with two scholarly sources, to make three to four salient points in support of your argument, including at least one counterargument that is then refuted."

Starting Your Research

When faced with an assignment, it's tempting to immediately search the internet for ideas. While this can be helpful, relying too heavily on external sources can overshadow your original thoughts. Here's why:

- **Maintaining Control**: If you start with an internet search, you risk letting others' ideas shape your planning, potentially influencing your own thoughts unconsciously.
- **Developing Your Ideas**: To improve your critical thinking and writing skills, it's essential to form your own ideas first. Your essay should be a reflection of your thoughts, enriched by external sources.

Crafting Your Own Ideas

Before diving into research, take the following steps:

1. **Generate Your Ideas**: Follow the advice in Chapter Two to brainstorm and develop your own ideas. This ensures clarity and originality in your writing.
2. **Free Writing**: Spend some time free writing on your chosen topic. This helps you uncover your thoughts and identify areas where you need more information.
3. **Identify Knowledge Gaps**: Determine where you need additional information or support. These are the areas where research can be most beneficial.

Conducting Effective Research

Once you have a clear idea of your topic and the gaps in your knowledge, begin your research:

- **Use Reputable Sources**: Look for scholarly articles, books, and credible websites to gather data and support your arguments.
- **Integrate Research Thoughtfully**: Use research to fill in the gaps and strengthen your arguments without letting it dominate your essay.

The Ultimate Rule for Research:

Don't let the research drive your ideas. YOU drive your ideas.

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9.2: Introduction

Introduction

We live in an age of immediate answers. Although we have not achieved parity in access to technology worldwide, information has never been easier to uncover. This is, of course, a double-edged sword: the proliferation of ideas due to the technological revolution enables new kinds of learning, but also has fundamentally changed the way we think and interact.

One of my friends refers to his iPhone as "The Wonder Killer": because he has such quick access to answers through the miniature computer he carries everywhere, the experience of sustained curiosity is now very rare in his life. All kinds of questions are easily answered by googling- "Who was that guy in *Back to the Future Part II*?" "Do spiders hibernate?"- or a brief crawl through Wikipedia- "How has globalization impacted Bhutan's economy?" "What life experiences influenced Frida Kahlo's painting?" But the answers to these questions, though easily discovered, paint a very one-dimensional portrait of human knowledge.

TED-ed Video: How Simple Ideas Lead to Scientific Discoveries by Adam Savage

Take a look at this brief TED video from Adam Savage of *Mythbusters*. For scientists and writers alike, the spirit of curiosity at once motivates individual learning and also the growth and progress of our collective knowledge. Your innate ability to be curious puts you in the league of the most brilliant and prolific scholars- people who were driven by questions, seeking to interrogate the world around them.

In this section, I add my voice to the chorus of writing teachers whose rallying cry is a renewed investment in curiosity[98]. Hopefully, you too will embrace inquisitive fascination by rejecting easy answers and using writing as a means of discovery.

Chapter Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Definition
confirmation bias	a cognitive bias by which a person seeks only ideas which confirm their existing worldview, thus convincing themselves that that worldview is universal and/or truthful.
inquiry-based research	research and research writing that is motivated by questions, not by answers.
ongoing conversation	an analogy for the network of discourse surrounding a topic, issue, or idea. Adopted from Kenneth Burke.
research question/ path of inquiry	a question, series of questions, or inquisitive topic that guides an inquiry-based research project.
stakes	the potential value of consequence of an exploration or argument; what stands to be gained from investigation of a subject or advocacy for a position. Consider also "stakeholders," the people or institutions that stand to gain from the outcome of an investigation or argument.

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9.3: Sources

It is possible to divide sources up into categories. You can save time in writing by focusing on the best sources. This is true in academic assignments as well as writing you may do for a job.

Types of sources

A useful way to categorize sources is as follows:

- *Excellent sources.* The best sources to use are called *primary* sources. These are the actual text of a work, such as an eyewitness report, the word-for-word law, the text of the most important book/s in the field, or, (sometimes, but rarely) the text of the important article in the most important journal/s in the field. An excellent source is any text that important experts and stakeholders turn to when they have to make a decision in real life about any given topic.
- *Good sources.* Articles (online and in print) and books written by academics about the topic area you chose. Also, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and textbooks.
- *Other sources.* Magazine and newspaper articles, or articles authored for use on the internet only.

Examples of types of sources

- If I am writing about Shakespeare, an excellent source is Shakespeare himself. A good source is a book written recently by a scholar about Shakespeare.
- If I am writing about the criminal mind, excellent sources are articles and books about the criminal mind, as well as important court cases and texts of law and psychology that govern how we deal with and think about the criminal mind.
- If I am writing about how my summer vacation went, the first most excellent source would be myself. The second would be my mom, or other people who know the most about what I did.
- If I am writing to argue for or against a local bar ordinance in my hometown, excellent sources would be the text of the ordinance itself and a statement given by the chief of police. Good sources would be articles in academic journals about local bar ordinances as well as any articles in local newspapers that cover the topic of the ordinance carefully.
- If I am writing about American policy on the war in Afghanistan, an excellent source would be a government document that governs the policy of the war today. Another excellent source would be a widely-read book or article about the war written by an expert in the field. A good source would be an academic journal article about the war written by an academic.

In general, original texts and those texts that people read and routinely refer to are the best texts.

A tip for finding sources

Read the abstract first, to see if you need to read the entire article. If there is no abstract, read the first few paragraphs to see if you need to read the entire article.

Finding sources

Where do you find information on a topic? Google it, obviously! Yes, in the early college courses you're taking, the internet likely has all the information you'll need to address your writing topics. This might also be true in the working world. There are many other resources, however, worth your consideration. Varying your source type will make your research stronger and show that you're a thoughtful writer.

Also, remember: you need to consider your audience and purpose before you start your research to determine what that group might need in terms of outside sources.

Finding sources: Basic search engines

The information you need is right at your fingertips. This is a cliché for a reason: *it's true!* Going online is the easiest way to research your topic. Most of us use Google, but Ask, Bing, Yahoo, among others are also popular, and we can easily pull these up on desktops or laptops or as apps on our smartphones. Yes, it's easy to find information using a search, especially when the search engine offers search terms for us as we're typing in what we'd like to find.

There are a few things to watch out for, though. First, many search engines will give you search results based on previous searches. This means that when you Google “political correctness,” the search results you get might be different than your buddy Malcolm’s, which might also be different than Ariana’s. Also, you want to be clear about your search terms. Instead of searching for “Lyme disease,” which will likely give you a basic definition along with over 60,000 results in less than a second (that's a LOT of information!), search for “Lyme disease Minnesota” or “Lyme disease alternative treatment” for more specific information and data. You can also type in questions, like “Can Lyme disease be cured?”

Remember, though, that just because a source *looks* good, that doesn’t mean it *is* good. And by “good,” we mean appropriately scholarly or professional for your topic and purpose.

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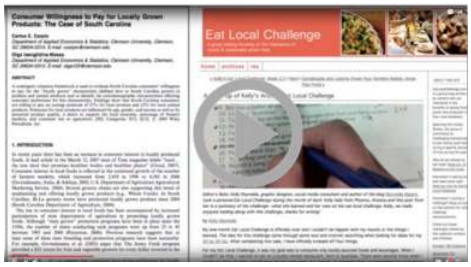
9.4: Techniques

Techniques

Research Methods: Discovering Sources

Let's bust a myth before going any further: there is no such thing as a "good" source. Check out this video from Portland Community College.



Video: Evaluating Sources to Find Quality Research by PCC Library

What makes a source "good" is actually determined by your purpose: *how* you use the source in your text is most important to determining its value. If you plan to present something as truth- like a fact or statistic- it is wise to use a peer-reviewed journal article (one that has been evaluated by a community of scholars). But if you're trying to demonstrate a perspective or give **evidence**, you may not find what you need in a journal.

Your Position	A Supporting Fact (Something you present as factual)	An Example that Demonstrates Your Position (Something that you present as a perspective)
Women are unfairly criticized on social media.	A peer-reviewed scholarly article: Sills, Sophie, et al. "Rape Culture and Social Media: Young Critics and a Feminist Counterpublic." *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 16, no. 6, 2016, pp. 935-951.	A popular but clickbait-y news site: Tamplin, Harley. "Instagram Users Are Massive Narcissists, Study Shows." *Elite Daily*, Bustle Digital Group3 April 2017.

If you want to showcase a diversity of perspectives, you will want to weave together a diversity of sources. As you discover useful sources, try to expand your usual research process by experimenting with the techniques and resources included in this chapter.

The first and most important determining factor of your research is *where* you choose to begin. Although there are a great number of credible and useful texts available across different search platforms, I generally encourage my students begin with two resources:

- Their college or university's library and its website, and
- Google Scholar.

These resources are not bulletproof, and you can't always find what you need through them. However, their general search functionality and the databases from which they draw tend to be more reliable, specific, and professional. It is quite likely that your argument will be better received if it relies on the kind of sources you discover with these tools.

Your Library

Although the following information primarily focuses on making good use of your library's online tools, one of the most valuable and under-utilized resources at your disposal are the librarians themselves. Do you know if your school has research librarians on staff? How about if your school has research librarians on staff? How about your local library? Research librarians (or, reference librarians) are not only well-versed in the research process, but they are also passionate about supporting students in their inquiry.

Photo by NESA by Makers on Unsplash

It's also possible that your library offers research support that you can access remotely: many colleges and universities provide librarian support via phone, text, instant message/chat, or e-mail. Some librarians even make video tutorials and do-it-yourself research tops and tricks.

The first step in learning how your library will support you is to investigate their website. Although I can't provide specific instruction for the use of your library website- they are all slightly different- I encourage you to spend ten minutes familiarizing yourself with the site, considering the following questions especially:

- Does the site have an FAQ, student support, Librarian Chat, or DIY link in case you have questions?
- Does the site have an integrated search bar (i.e., a search engine that allows you to search some or all databases and the library catalogue simultaneously)?
- How do you access the "advanced search" function of the library's search bar?
- Does your account have an eShelf or reading list to save sources you find?
- Is your library a member of a resource sharing network, like ILLiad or SUMMIT? How do you request a source through this network?
- Does your library subscribe to multimedia or digital resource services, like video streaming or eBook libraries?
- Does the site offer any citation management support software, like Mendeley or Zotero? (You can find links to these tools in the Additional Recommend Resources appendix.)

Depending on where you're learning, your school will provide different access to scholarly articles, books, and other media.

Most schools pay subscriptions to databases filled will academic works in addition to owning a body of physical texts (books, DVDs, magazines, etc.). Some schools are members of exchange services for physical texts as well, in which case a network of libraries can provide resources to students at your school.

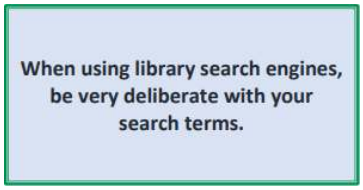
It is worth noting that most library websites use an older form of search technology. You have likely realized that day-to-day search engines like Google will predict what you're searching, correct your spelling, and automatically return results that your search terms might not have exactly aligned with. (For example, I could google *How many basketball players on Jazz roster* and I would still likely get the results I needed.) Most library search engines don't do this, so you need to be very deliberate with your search terms. Here are some tips:

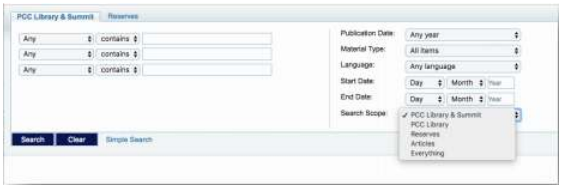
- Consider synonyms and jargon that might be more likely to yield results. As you research, you will become more fluent in the language of your subject. Keep track of vocabulary that other scholars use, and revise your search terms based on this context-

specific language.

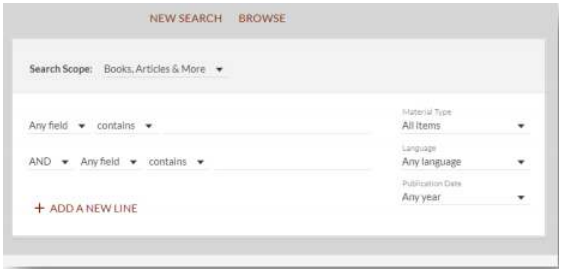
- Use the Boolean operators ? and * for expanded results:
  - wom?n yields results for woman, women, womyn, etc.
  - medic* yields results for medic, medicine, medication, medicinal, medical, etc.

Use the advanced search feature to combine search terms, exclude certain results, limit the search terms' applicability, etc.

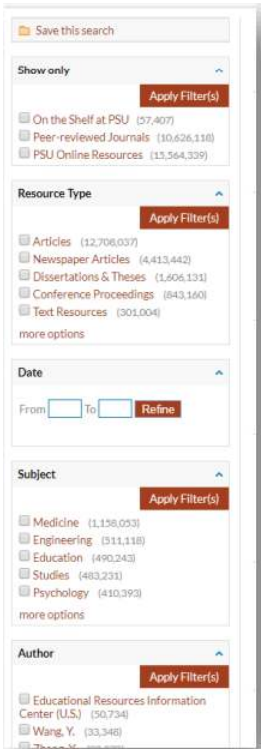




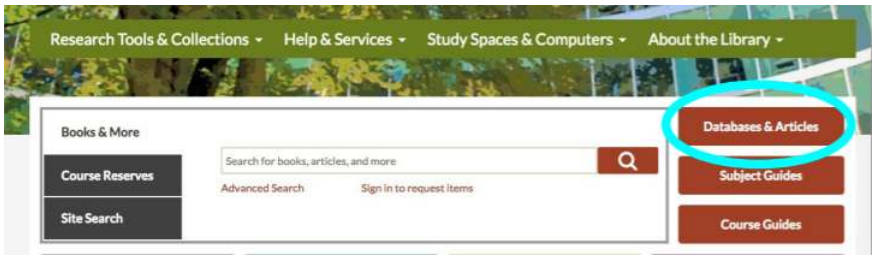
Advanced search fields like these allow you to put more specific constraints on your search. Your library website's search feature will likely allow you to limit the results you get by year of publication, medium, genre or topic, and other constraints.

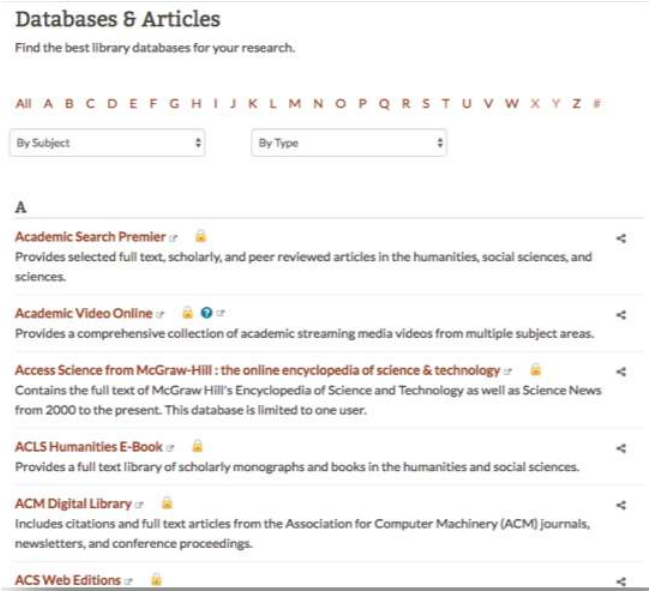


You may also be able to refine your first set of results using filters (typically on the left side of the page and/ or above the results.) For instance, if your teacher requires you to use a peer-reviewed source, your library database may allow you to limit your results to only peer-reviewed journals, as illustrated here.



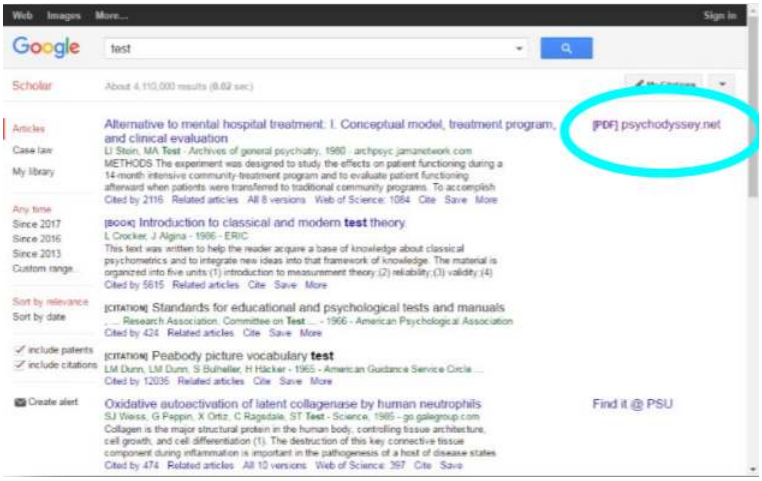
JSTOR, *Academic Search Premier*, and *EBSCO* are three databses that most schools subscribe to; they are quite broad and well established. Especially if your school's library doesn't have an integrated search function, you may need to access these databases directly. Look for a link on your library website to "Databases" (or something to that effect) to find specific networks of sources.



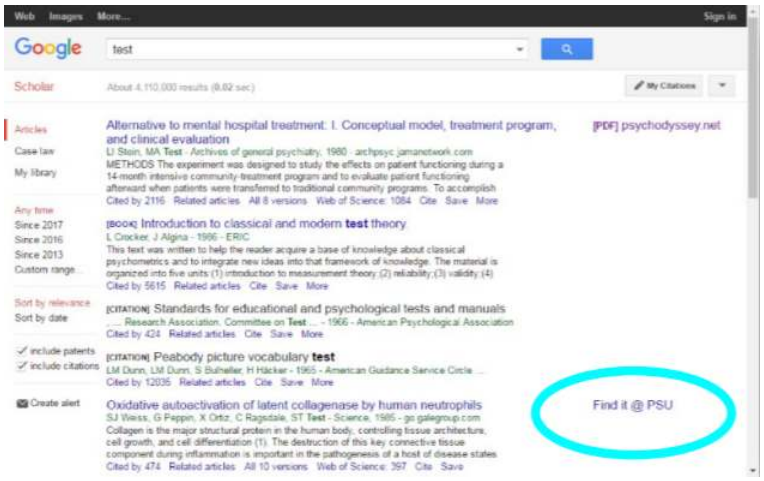


Google Scholar

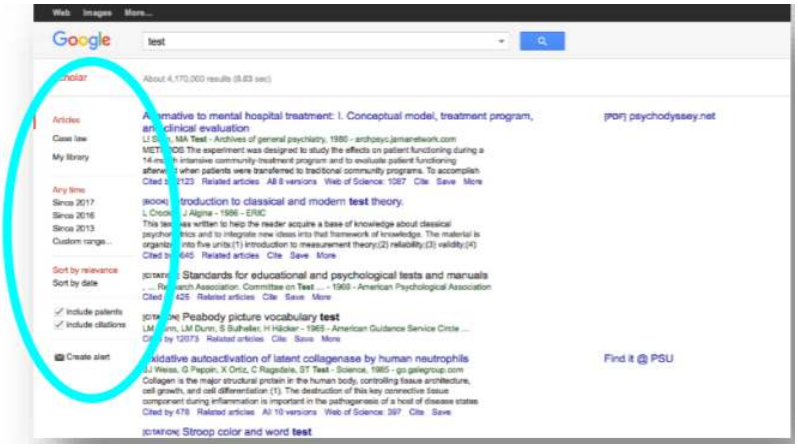
Because Google Scholar is a bit more intuitive than most library search engines, and because it draws from large databases, you might find it easier to use. Many of the results you turn up using Google Scholar are available online as free access PDFs.



That said, Scholar will often bring up citations for books, articles, and other texts that you don't have access to. That said, Scholar will often bring up citations for books, articles, and other texts that you don't have access to. Before you use Google Scholar, make sure you're logged in to your school account in the same browser; the search engine should provide links to "Find it @ [your school]" if your institution subscribes to the appropriate database.



If you find a citation, article preview, or other text via Google Scholar but can't access it easily, you return to your library website and search for it directly. It's possible that you have access to the text via a loaning program like ILLiad.



Google Scholar will also let you limit your results by various constraints, making it easier to wade through many, many results.

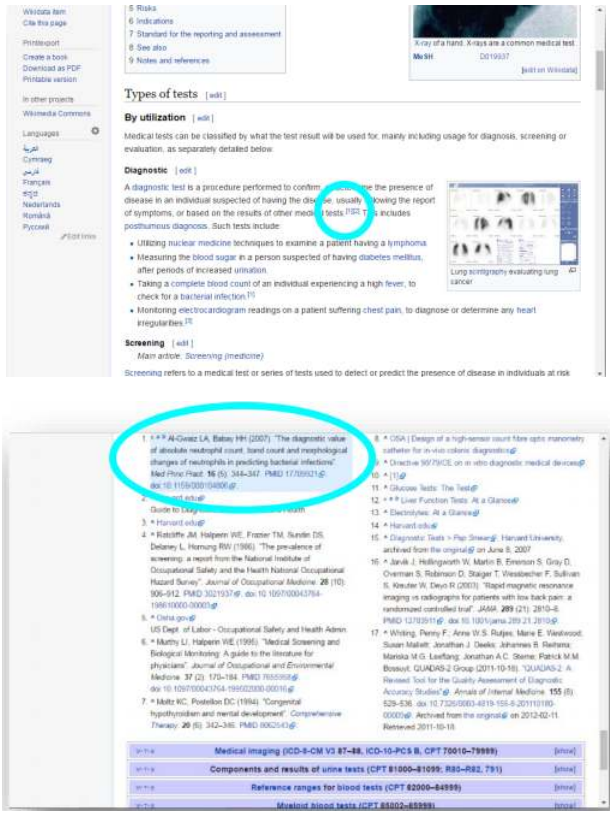
- Google Tricks That Will Change the Way You Search" by Jack Linshi
- "Refine web searches" and "Filter your search results" from Google's help section

Wikipedia

A quick not on Wikipedia: many instructors forbid the use of Wikipedia as a cited source in an essay. Wikipedia is a great place for quick facts and background knowledge, but because its content is user-created and -curated, it is vulnerable to the spread of misinformation characteristic of the broader internet. Wikipedia has been vetting their articles more thoroughly in recent years, but only about 1 in 200 are internally rated as "good articles." There are two hacks that you should know in order to use Wikipedia more critically:

- It is wise to avoid a page has a warning symbol at the top, such as:
  - This article needs to updated,
  - The examples and perspective in this article deal primarily with the United States and do not represent a worldwide view of the subject,
  - The neutrality of this article is disputed,
  - This article needs additional citations for verification,
  - This article include a list of references, but its sources remain unclear because it has insufficient inline citations.
- If your Wikipedia information is crucial and seems reliable, use the linked citation to draw from instead of the Wikipedia page, as pictured below. This will help you ensure that the linked content is legitimate (dead links and suspect citations are no good)

and avoid citing Wikipedia as a main source.



Other Resources

As we continue to discuss, the most useful sources for your research project are not always proper academic, peer-reviewed articles. For instance, if I were writing a paper on the experience of working for United Airlines, a compelling blog post by a flight attendant that speaks to the actual working conditions they experienced might be more appropriate than a data-driven scholar investigation of the United Airlines consumer trends. You might find that a TED Talk, a published interview, an advertisement or some other non-academic source would be useful for your writing. Therefore, it's important that you apply the skills and techniques from "Evaluating Sources" to all the texts you encounter, being especially careful with texts that some people might see as unreliable.

Additional Techniques for Discovering Sources

All it takes is one or two really good sources to get you started. You should keep your perspective wide to catch as much as you can- but if you've found a handful of good sources, there are four tools that can help you find even more:

- The author of that perfect article probably got some of their information from somewhere else, just like you. **Citation mining** is the process of using a text's citations, bibliography, or notes to track down other similar or related sources. Plug the author's citations into your school's library search engine or Google Scholar to see if you have access.

enced, errors are more probable to occur, and thus are not perceived as choking as much as when pressure is absent. To summarise, performance decline and choking are 2 related terms which describe perceptions of conducting performance errors. Specifically, performance decline refers to any negative departure from performance (i.e., a mistake or an error), while choking is a special case of conducting an error – mainly under conditions which do not promote it. A performance decline can occur at any point of the game and can be minor, moderate, or major depending on the type of error committed. Choking on the other hand is a term that is situational and is more reserved for the latter half of the game when it is less expected to happen.

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Gucciardi, D. F., & Dimmock, J. A. (2008). Choking under pressure in sensorimotor skills: Conscious processing or depleted attentional resources? *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 9*, 45–59. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2006.10.007

Gucciardi, D. F., Longbottom, J., Jackson, B., & Dimmock, J. A. (2010). Experienced golfers' perspectives on choking under pressure. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 32*, 61–83. doi:10.1123/jsep.32.1.61

Hill, D. M., Hanton, S., Fleming, S., & Matthews, N. (2009). A re-examination of choking in sport. *European Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 3*(1), 203–212.

Hill, D. M., Hanton, S., Matthews, N., & Fleming, S. (2010a). Choking in sport: A review. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 3*(1), 24–39. doi:10.1080/17509840903301199

Hill, D. M., Hanton, S., Matthews, N., & Fleming, S. (2010b). A qualitative exploration of choking in elite golf. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 4*, 221–240. doi:10.1123/jcsp.4.3.221

Hill, D. M., Hanton, S., Matthews, N., & Fleming, S. (2011). Alleviation of choking under pressure in elite golf: An action research study. *The Sport Psychologist, 25*, 465–488. doi:10.1123/tsp.25.4.465

Hill, D. M., & Shaw, G. (2013). A qualitative examination of choking under pressure in team sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 14*, 103–110. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2012.07.008

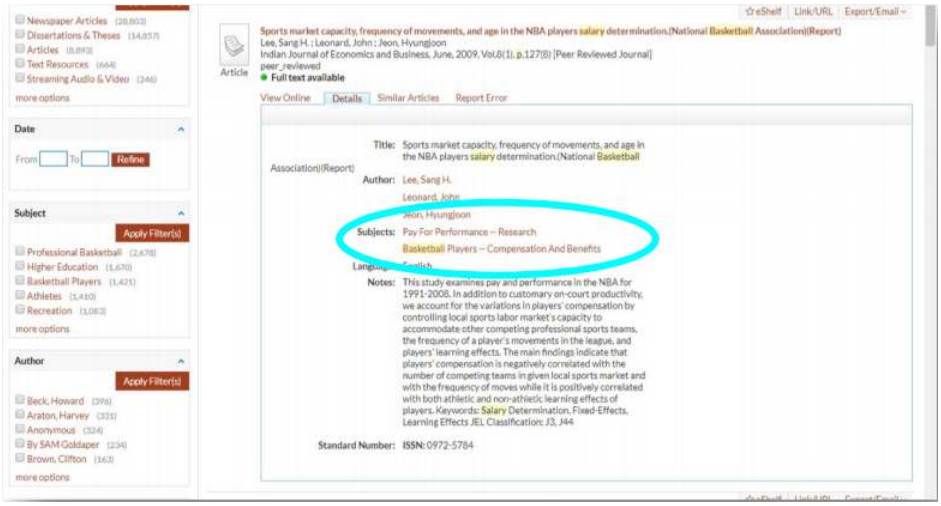
Jackson, R. C. (2013). Babies and bathwater: Commentary on Mesagno and Hill's proposed re- definition of 'choking'. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 44*(4), 281–284.

Lewis, B., & Linder, D. E. (1997). Thinking about choking? Attentional processes and paradoxical performance. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 23*, 937–944. doi:10.1177/0146167297239003

Mesagno, C. (2009, June 17-21). *Choking under pressure: Toward a self-presentation explanation of why athletes use self-monitoring techniques*. Paper presented at the 12th World Congress of Sport Psychology, Marrakesh

Mesagno, C., Harvey, J. T., & Janelle, C. M. (2011). Self-presentation origins of choking: Evidence from separate pressure manipulations. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 33*, 441–459. doi:10.1123/jsep.33.3.441

- Web of Science is like reverse citation mining: instead of using a text's bibliography to find more sources, you find other sources that cite your text in *their* bibliographies. Web of Science is a digital archive that shows you connections between different authors and their writing- and not only for science! If you find a good source that is documented in this database, you can see other texts that cite that source.
- **Bootstrapping** is a technique that works best on search engines with detail features, like your library search engine. As you can see in the screenshot below, these search engines tag each text with certain subject keywords. By clicking on those keywords, you can link to other texts tagged with the same keywords, typically according to Library of Congress standards.



- WorldCat is a tremendous tool that catalogs the most citations of any database I've ever seen. Even though you can't always access texts through WorldCat, you can figure out which nearby libraries might be able to help you out.

The first and most important piece of advice I can offer you as you begin to dig into these sources: stay organized. By taking notes and keeping record of where each idea is coming from, you save yourself a lot of time- and avoid the risk of unintentional plagiarism. If you could stand to brush up on your notetaking skills, take a look at Appendix A: Engaged Reading Strategies.

Research Methods: Evaluating Source

If there's no such thing as an inherently "good" or "bad" source, how do we determine if a source is right for our purposes? As you sift though sources, you should consider **credibility** and **use-value** to determine whether a source is right for you. Credibility refers to the reliability and accuracy of the author, their writing, and the publisher. Use-value is a broad term that includes whether you should use a text in your research paper, as well as how you will use that text. The **CRAAP Test** will help you explore both credibility and use-value.

Currency

How recently was the text created? Does that impact the accuracy or value of its contents, either positively or negatively?

Generally, a text that is current is more credible and useful: data will be more accurate, the content will reflect more up-to-date ideas, and so on. However, there are some exceptions.

- A text that is not current might be useful because it reflects attitudes of its publication era. For instance, if I were writing a paper on sexism in the office environment, it might be convincing to include a memo on dress codes from 1973.
- A text that it current might not be useful because the phenomena it discusses might not have existed long enough to have substantial evidence or study. For instance, if I were writing a paper on nanorobotics, it would be difficult to evaluate the long-term impacts of this emergent technology because it simply hasn't been around long enough.

Relevance

Is text closely related to your topic? Does it illuminate your topic, or is it only tangentially connected?

A text that is relevant is generally more useful, as you probably already realize. Exceptions to this might include:

- A text that is too relevant might not be useful because it might create overlap or redundancy in your argument. You should use texts like this to pivot, complicate, or challenge your topic so you are not just repeating someone else's ideas.
- A text that is only slightly relevant might be useful in providing background knowledge, drawing our an analogy, or gesturing to important questions or ideas you don't have room to discuss in the scope of your paper.

Accuracy

Is there any reason to doubt the validity of the text? Is it possible that the information and ideas included are simply untrue?

You might start out by relying on your instincts to answer these questions, but your evaluation of accuracy should also informed more objectively by the other elements of the CRAAP Test (e.g., if a text is outdated, it might no longer be accurate). Of course, the importance of this element depends on your use of the source; for instance, if I were writing a paper on conservative responses to Planned Parenthood, I might find it useful to discuss the inaccurate videos released by a pro-choice group several years ago.

Authority

Who is the author? Who is the publisher? Do either or both demonstrate ethos *through their experience, credentials, or public perception?*

This element also depends on your use of the source; for instance, if I were writing a paper on cyberbulling, I might find it useful to bring posts from anonymous teenagers. Often, though, academic presses (e.g., Oxford University) and government publishers (e.g., hhs.gov) are assumed to have an increased degree of authority when compared with popular presses (e.g., *The Atlantic*) or self-published texts (e.g., blogs). It may be difficult to ascertain an author and a publisher's authority without further research, but here are some red flags if you're evaluating a source with questionable authority:

- There is no author listed
- The website hosting the webpage or article is incomplete, outdated, or broken.
- The author seems to use little factual evidence.
- The author is known for extreme or one-dimensional views.
- The source has a sponsoring organization with an agenda that might undermine the validity of the information.

Purpose

What is the author trying to achieve with their text? What are their motivations or reasons for publication and writing? Does that purpose influence the credibility of the text?

As we've discussed, every piece of rhetoric has a purpose. It's important that you identify and evaluate the implied and/or declared purposes of a text before you put too much faith in it.

Even though you're making efforts to keep an open mind to different positions, it is likely that you've already formed some opinions about your topic. As you review each source, try to read both with and against the grain; in other words, try to position yourself at least once as a **doubter** and at least once as **believer**. Regardless of what the source actually has to say, you should (a) try to take the argument on its own terms and try to appreciate or understand it; *and* (b) be critical of it, looking for its blind spots

and problems. This is especially important when we encounter texts we really like or really dislike- we need to challenge our early perceptions to interrupt projection.

As you proceed through each step of the CRAAP Test, try to come up with answers as both a doubter and a believer. For example, try to come up with a reason why a source's Authority makes it credible and useful; then, come up with a reason why the same source's Authority makes it unreliable and not useful.

This may seem like a cumbersome process, but with enough practice, the CRAAP Test will become second nature. You will become more efficient as you evaluate more texts, and eventually you will be able to identify a source's use-value and credibility without running the entire test. Furthermore, as you may already realize, you can eventually just start eliminating sources if they fail to demonstrate credibility and/or use-value through at least one step of the CRAAP Test.

Interpreting Sources and Processing Information

Once you've found a source that seems both useful and credible, you should spend some time reading, rereading, and interpreting that text. The more time you allow yourself to think through a text, the more likely your use of it will be rhetorically effective.

Although it is time-consuming, I encourage you to process each text by:

- Reading once through, trying to develop a global understanding of the content
- Re-reading at least once, annotating the text along the way, and then copying quotes, ideas, and your reactions into your notes
- Summarizing the text in your notes in casual prose
- Reflecting on how the text relates to your topic and your stance on the topic
- Reflecting on how the text relates to others you've read

You need not perform such thorough reading with texts you don't indeed to use-e.g., if you determine that the source is too old to inform your work. However, the above list will ensure that you develop a nuanced and accurate understanding of the author's perspective. Think of this process as part of the ongoing conversation: before you start expressing your ideas, you should listen carefully, ask follow-up questions to clarify what you've heard, and situate the ideas within the context of the bigger discussion.

The Annotated Bibliography

So far, you have discovered, evaluated, and begun to process your sources intellectually. Your next steps will vary based on your rhetorical situation, but it is possible that your teacher will ask you to write an annotated bibliography before or during the drafting process for your actual essay.

An **annotated bibliograpghy** is a formalized exercise in the type of interpretation described throughout this section. An annotated bibliography is like a long works cited page, but underneath each citation is a paragraph that explains and analyzes the text. Examples are included in this section to give you an idea of what an annotated bibliography might look like.

Annotated bibliographies have a few purposes:

a) To organize your research so you don't lose track of where different ideas come from,

b) To help you process texts in a consistent and thorough way, and

c) To demonstrate your ongoing research process for your teacher.

This kind of writing can also be an end in itself: many scholars publish annotated bibliographies as research or teaching tools. They can be helpful for authors like you, looking for an introduction to a conversation or a variety of perspectives on a topic. As an example, consider the model annotated bibliography "What Does It Mean to Be Educated?" later in this chapter.

Although every teacher will have slightly different ideas about what goes into an annotated bibliography, I encourage my students to include the following:

- A brief summary of the main ideas discussed in the text and/or an evaluation of the rhetoric or argumentation deployed by the author.

    a) What are the key insights, arguments, or pieces of information included in the source? What is the author's purpose? How does their language pursue that purpose?

- A consideration of the text's place in the ongoing conversation about your topic.

    a) To what other ideas, issues, and texts is your text responding? How would you describe the intended audience? Does the author seem credible, referencing other "speakers" in the conversation?

- A description of the text's use-value.

    a) Is the text useful? How do you predict you will use the text in your work?

You might note that your work in the CRAAP Test will provide useful answers for some of these questions.

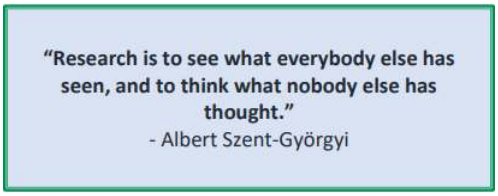
Sometimes, I'll also include a couple of compelling quotes in my annotations. Typically, I request that students write about 100 words for each annotation, but you should ask your teacher if they have more specific guidelines.

Your annotated bibliography will be an excellent tool as you turn to the next steps of research writing: synthesizing a variety of voices with your ideas and experiences. it is a quick reference guide, redirecting you to the texts you found most valuable; more abstractly, it will support you in perceiving a complex and nuanced conversation on your topic.

Research Methods: Drawing from Sources and Synthesizing

Finding Your Position, Posture, and Perspective

As you begin drafting your research essay, remembering the conversation analogy: by using other voices, you are entering into a discussion that is much bigger than just you, even bigger than the authors you cite. However, what you have to say is important, so you are bringing together your ideas with other's ideas from a unique interpretive standpoint. Although it may take you a while to find it, you should be searching for your unique position in a complex network of discourse.



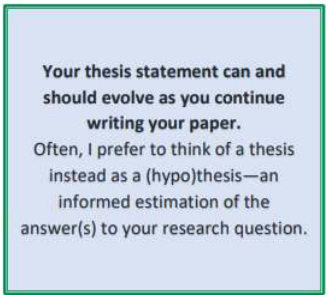
Here are a few questions to ask yourself as you consider this:

- How would I introduce this topic to someone who is completely unfamiliar?
- What are the major viewpoints on this topic? Remember that very few issues have only two sides.
- With which viewpoints do I align? With which viewpoints do I disagree? Consider agreement ("Yes"), disagreement ("No"), and qualification ("Yes, but...").
- What did I know about this issue before I began researching? What have I learned so far? What is my rhetorical purpose with this project? If your purpose is to argue a position, be sure that you feel comfortable with the terms and ideas discussed in the previous section on argumentation.

Articulating Your Claim

Once you've started to catch the rhythm of the ongoing conversation, it's time to find a way to put your perspective into words. Bear in mind that your thesis statement should evolve as you research, draft, and revise: you might tweak the wording, adjust your scope, change your position or even your entire topic in the course of your work.

Because your thesis is a "working thesis" or "(hypo)thesis," you should use the following strategies to draft your thesis but be ready to make adjustments along the way.



In Chapter 6, we introduced the T3, Occasion/Position, and Embedded Thesis models. As a refresher,

- A T3 statement articulates the author's stance, then offers three support reasons, subtopics, or components of the argument.

Example

Throughout history, women have been legally oppressed by different social institutions, including exclusion from the workplace, restriction of voting rights, and regulations of healthcare.

- An Occasion/Position statement starts with a statement of relevance related to the rhetorical occasionm then articulates the author's stance.

Example

Recent Congressional activity in the U.S has led me to wonder how women's freedoms have been restricted throughout historu. Women have been legally oppressed by many different institutions since the inception of the United States.

- An Embedded Thesis presents the research question, perhaps with a gesture to the answer(s). This strategy requires that you clearly articulate your stance somewhere later in your paper, at a point when your evidence has led you to the answer to your guiding question.

Example

Many people would agree that women have experience oppression throughout the history of the United States, but how has this oppression been exercised legally through different social institutions?

Of course, these are only three strategies to write a thesis. You may use one of them, combine several of them, or use a different strategy entirely.

Tobuild on these strategies, we should look at three kinds of claims: three sorts of postures that you might take to articulate your stance at a thesis.

- **Claim of Phenomenon**: This statement indicates that your essay will explore a measurable byt arguable happening.

Example

Obesity rates correlate with higher rates of poverty.

Claims of phenomenon are often more straightforward, but should still be arguable and worth discussion.

- **Claim of Evaluation**: This statement indicates that your essay will determine something that is better, best, worse, or worst in regard to your topic.

Example

The healthiest nations are those with economic safety nets.

Claims of evaluation require you to make an informed judgement based on evidence. In this example, the student would have to establish a metric for "healthy" in addition to exploring the way that economic safety nets promote healthful behaviors- What makes someone "healthy" and why are safety nets a pathway to health?

- **Claim of Policy**: This statement indicates that your essay will propose a plan of action to best address an issue.

Example

State and federal governments should create educational programs, develop infrastructure, and establish food-stamp benefits to promote healthy eating for people experiencing poverty.

Claims of policy do the most heavy lifting: they articulate a stance that requires action, from the reader or from another stakeholder. A claim of policy often uses the word "should."

You may notice that these claims can be effectively combined at your discretion. Sometimes, when different ideas overlap, it's absolutely necessary to combine them to create a cohesive stance. For instance, in the example above, the claim of policy would require the author to establish a claim of phenomenon, too: before advocating for action, the author must demonstrate what that action responds to. For more practice, check out the activity in the following section titled "Articulating Your Claim- Practicing Thesis Development."

Situating Yourself Using Your Research

While you're drafting, be diligent and deliberate with your use of other people's words, ideas, and perspectives. Foreground *your* thesis (even if it's still in progress) and use paraphrases, direct quotes, and summary in the background to explain, support, complicate, or contrast your perspective.

Depending on the work you've done to this point, you may have a reasonable body of quotes, summaries, and paraphrases that you can draw from. Whether or not you've been collecting evidence throughout your research process, be sure to return to the original sources to ensure the accuracy and efficacy of your quotes, summaries, and paraphrases.

In Section 2, we encountered paraphrasing, quoting, and summarizing for a text wrestling essay, but let's tale a minute to revisit them in this new rhetorical situation. How do you think using support in a research paper is different from using support in an analysis?

A **direct quote** uses quotation marks (" ") to indicate where you're borrowing an author's words verbatim in your own writing. Use a direct quote if someone else wrote or said something in a distinctive or particular way and you want to capture their words exactly.

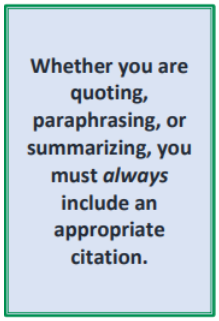
Direct quotes are good for establishing *ethos* and providing evidence. In a research essay, you will be expected to use some direct quotes; however, too many direct quotes can overwhelm your thesis and actually undermine your sense of *ethos*. Your research paper should strike a balance between quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing- and articulating your own perspective!

Summarizing refers to the action of boiling down an author's ideas into a shorter version in your own words. Summary demonstrates your understanding of a text, but it also can be useful in giving background information or making a complex idea more accessible.

When we **paraphrase**, we are processing information or ideas from another person's text and putting it in our own words. The main difference between paraphrase and summary is scope: if summarizing means rewording and condensing, then paraphrasing means rewording without drastically altering length. However, paraphrasing is also generally more faithful to the spirit of the original; whereas a summary requires you to process and invites your own perspective, a paraphrase ought to mirror back the original idea using your own language.

Paraphrasing is helpful for establishing background knowledge or general consensus, simplifying a complicated idea, or reminding your reader of a certain part of another text. It is also valuable when relaying statistics or historical information, both of which are

usually more fluidly woven into your writing when spoken with your own voice.



Each of these three tactics should support your argument: you should integrate quotes, paraphrases, and summary in with your own writing. Below, you can see three examples of these tools. Consider how the direct quote, the paraphrase, and the summary each could be used to achieve different purposes.

Example

Original Passage

It has been suggested (again rather anecdotally) that giraffes do communicate using infrasonic vocalizations (the signals are verbally described to be similar- in structure and function- to the low-frequency, infrasonic "rumbles" of elephants). It was further speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes act as a resonance chamber for infrasound production. Moreover, particular neck movements (e.g. the neck stretch) are suggested to be associated with the production of infrasonic vocalizations.[107]

Quote	Paraphrase	Summary
Some zoological experts have pointed out that the evidence for giraffe hums has been "rather anecdotally" reported (Baotic et al. 3). However, some scientists have "speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production" (Ibid. 3).	Giraffes emit a low-pitch noise; some scientists believe that this *hum* can be used for communication with other members of the social group, but others are skeptical because of the dearth of research on giraffe noises. According to Baotic et al., the anatomy of the animal suggests that they may be making deliberate and specific noises (3).	Baotic et al. conducted a study on giraffe hums in response to speculation that these noises are used deliberately for communication.

These examples also demonstrate additional citation conventions worth noting:

- A parenthetical in-text citation is used for all three forms. (In MLA format, this citation includes the author's last name and page number.) The purpose of an in-text citation is to identify key information that guides your reader to your Works Cited page (or Bibliography or References, depending on your format).
- If you use the author's name in the sentence, you do not need to include their name in the parenthetical citation.
- If your material doesn't come from a specific page or page range, rather from the entire text, you do not need to include a page number in the parenthetical citation.
- If there are many authors (generally more than three), you can use "et al." to mean "and others."
- If you cite the same source consecutively in the same paragraph (without citing any other sources in between), you can use "Ibid." to mean "same as the last one."

There are infinite ways to bring evidence into your discussion,[108] but for now, let's revisit a formula that many students find productive as they find their footing in research writing: **Front-load** + **Quote/Paraphrase/Summarize** + **Cite** + **Explain/elaborate/analyze**.

Front-load + (1-2 sentences)	**Quote, paraphrase, or summarize** +	**(cite)** +	**Explain, elaborate, analyze** (2-3 sentences)
Set your reader up for the quote using a **signpost** (also known as a "signal phrase"). Don't drop quotes in abruptly: by front-loading, you can guide your reader's interpretation.	Use whichever technique is relevant to your rhetorical purpose at that exact point.	Use an in-text citation appropriate to your discipline. It doesn't matter if you quote, paraphrase, or summarize- all three require a citation	Perhaps most importantly, you need to make the value of this evidence clear to the reader. What does it mean? How does it further your thesis?

This might feel formulaic and forced at first, but following these steps will ensure that you give each piece of evidence thorough attention.

What might this look like in practice?

Example

(1) Humans and dolphins are not the only mammals with complex systems of communication. As a matter of fact, (2) some scientists have "speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production" ((3) Baotic et al. 3). (4) Even though no definitive answer has been found, it's possible that the structure of a giraffe's head allows it to create sounds that humans may not be able to hear. This hypothesis supports the notion that different species of animals develop a sort of "language" that corresponds to their anatomy.

1. Front-load

Humans and dolphins are not the only mammals with complex systems of communication. As a matter of fact,

2. Quote

Some scientists have "speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production"

3. Cite

(Baotic et al. 3).

4. Explain/elaborate/analyze

Even though no definitive answer has been found, it's possible that the structure of a giraffe's head allows it to create sounds that humans may not be able to hear. This hypothesis supports the notion that different species of animals develop a sort of "language" that corresponds to their anatomy.

Extended Quotes

A quick note on **block quotes**: Sometimes, you may find it necessary to use a long direct quote from a source. For instance, if there is a passage that you plan to analyze in-depth or throughout the course of the entire paper, you may need to reproduce the whole thing. You may have seen other authors use block quotes in the course of your research. In the middle of a sentence or paragraph, the text will break into a long direct quote that is indented and separated from the rest of the paragraph.

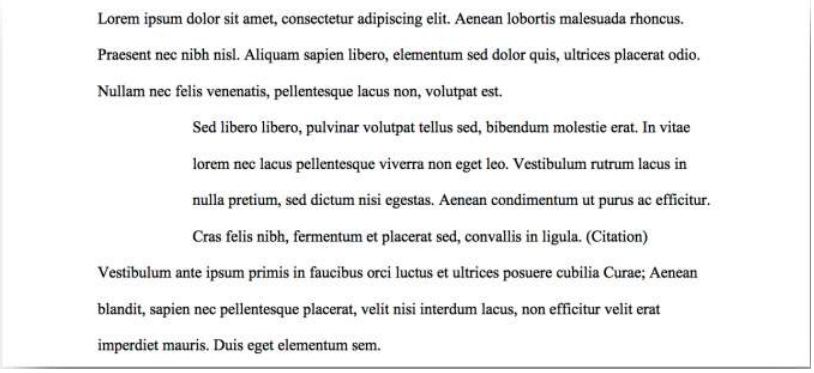
There are occasions when it is appropriate for you to use block quotes, too, but they are rare. Even though long quotes can be useful, quotes long enough to block are often too long. Using too much of one source all at once can overwhelm your own voice and analysis, distract the reader, undermine your *ethos*, and prevent you from digging into a quote. It's typically a better choice to

- abridge (omit words from the beginning or end of the quote, or from the middle using an ellipsis [...]),
- break up (split one long quote into two or three shorter quotes that you can attend to more specifically), or

- paraphrase

a long quote, especially because that gives you more space for the last step of the formula above.

If, in the rare event that you must use a long direct quote, one which runs more than four lines on a properly formatted page, follow the guidelines from the appropriate style guide. In MLA format, block quotes are: (a) indented one inch from the margin, (b) double-spaced, (c) not in quotation marks, and (d) use original end-punctuation and an in-text citation after the last sentence. The paragraph will continue after the block quote without any indentation.



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> Sed libero libero, pulvinar volutpat tellus sed, bibendum molestie erat. In vitae lorem nec lacus pellentesque viverra non eget leo. Vestibulum rutrum lacus in nulla pretium, sed dictum nisi egestas. Aenean condimentum ut purus ac efficitur. Cras felis nibh, fermentum et placerat sed, convallis in ligula. (Citation)

Vestibulum ante ipsum primis in faucibus orci luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia Curae; Aenean blandit, sapien nec pellentesque placerat, velit nisi interdum lacus, non efficitur velit erat imperdiet mauris. Duis eget elementum sem.

Readerly Signposts

Signposts are phrases and sentences that guide a reader's interpretation of the evidence you are about to introduce. Readerly signposts are also known as "signal phrases" because they give the reader a warning of your next move. In addition to foreshadowing a paraphrase, quote, or summary, though, your signposts can be active agents in your argumentation.

"Signpost Blank" by Karen Arnold is in the Public Domain, CC0

Before using a paraphrase, quote, or summary, you can prime your reader to understand that evidence in a certain way.

✔ For example, let's take the imaginary quote, "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."

[X] insists, "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."

Some people belive, naively, that "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."

Common knowledge suggests that "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."

[X] posits that "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."

Although some people believe otherwise, the truth is that "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."

Although some people believe that "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick," it is more likely that...

Whenever conspiracy theories come up, people like to joke that "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."

> **The government has conducted many covert operations in the last century:** "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."

What does each signpost do to us, as readers, encountering the same quote?

A very useful resource for applying these signposts is the text *They Say, I Say*, which you may be able to find online or at your school's library.

Addressing Counterarguments

As you recall from the chapter on argumentation, a good argument acknowledges other voices. Whether you're trying to refute those counterarguments or find common ground before moving forward, it is important to include a diversity of perspectives in your argument. One highly effective way to do so is by using the readerly signpost that I call **the naysayer's voice**.

Simply put, the naysayer is a voice that disagrees with you that you imagine into your essay. Consider, for example, this exercept from Paul Greenough:

> ✔ Consider, for example, this execept from Paul Greenough:
>
> It appears that tigers cannot be accurately counted and that uncertainty is as endemic to their study as to the study of many other wildlife populations. In the meantime, pugmark counting continues. .. In the end, the debate over numbers cannot be resolved; while rising trends were discernible through the 1970s and 1980s, firm baselines and accurate numbers were beyong anyone's grasp.
>
> CRITIC: Are you emphasizing this numbers and counting buisness for some reason?
>
> AUTHOR: Yes. I find it instructive to compare the degree of surveillance demanded by the smallpox eradication campaign...with the sketchy methods sufficient to keep Project Tiger afloat. ...
>
> CRITIC: Maybe numbers aren't as central to these large state enterprises as you assume?
>
> AUTHOR: No,no-they live and die by them.[109]

Notice the advantages of this technique:

- Greenough demonstrates, first and foremost, that the topic he's considering is part of a broad conversation involving many voices and perspectives.
- He is able to effectively transition between ideas.
- He *controls* the counterargument by asking the questions he wants to be asked.

Give it a shot in your own writing by adding a reader's or a naysayer's voice every few paragraphs: imagine what a skeptical, curious, or enthusiastic audience might say in response to each of your main points.

Revisiting Your Research Question, Developing an Introduction, and Crafting a Conclusion

Introductions

Introductions are the most difficult part of any paper for me. Not only does it feel awkward, but I often don't know quite what I want to say until I've written the essay. Fortunately, we don't have to force out an intro before we're ready. Give yourself premission to draft out of order! For instance, I typically write the entire body of the essay before returning to the top to draft an introduction.

If you draft out of order, though, you should dedicate time to crafting an effective introduction before turning in the final draft. The introduction to a paper is your chance to make a first impression on your reader. You might be establishing a conceptual framework, setting a tone, or showing the reader a way in. Furthermore, due to the **primacy effect**, readers are more likely to remember your intro than most of the rest of your essay.

In this brief section, I want to note two pet peeves for introductions, and then offer a handful of other possibilities.

Don't

Avoid these two techniques:

- **Starting with fluffy, irrelevant, or extremely general statements**. Sometimes, developing authors make really broad observations or facts that just take up space before getting to the good stuff. You can see this demonstrated in the "Original" version of the student example below.
- **Offering a definition for something that your audience already knows**. At some point, this method became a stock-technique for starting speeches, essays, and other texts: "Merriam Webster defines *x* as...." You've probably heard it before. As pervasive as this technique is, though, it is generally ineffective for two reasons: (1) it is hackneyed- overused to the point of meaninglessness, and (2) it rarely offers new insight- the audience probably already has sufficient knowledge of the definition. There is an exception to this point, though! You can overcome issue #2 by *analyzing* the definition you give: does the difinition reveal something about our common-sense that you want to critique? Does it contradict or overlook connotations? Do you think the definition is too narrow, too broad, or too ambiguous? In other words, you can use the definition technique as long as you're *doing* something with the definition.

Do

These are a few approaches to introductions that my students often find successful. Perhaps the best advice I can offer, though, is to try out a lot of different introductions and see which ones feel better to you, the author. Which do you like most, and which do you think will be most impactful to your audience?

- **Telling a story**. Not only will this kick your essay off with *pathos* and specificity, but it can also lend variety to the voice you use throughout the rest of your essay. A story can also provide a touchstone, or a reference pointm for you and your reader; you can relate your argument back to the story and its characters as you develop more complex ideas.
- **Describing a scene**. Similarly, thick description can provide your reader a mental image to grasp before you present your research question and thesis. This is the technique used in the model below.
- **Asking a question**. This is a common technqieu teachers share with their students when describing a "hook." You want your reader to feel curious, excited, and involved as they start reading your essay, and posing a thought-provoking question can bring them into the conversation too.
- **Using a striking quote or fact**. Another "hook" technique: starting off your essay with a meaningful quote, shocking statistic, or curious fact can catch a reader's eye and stimulate their curiosity.
- **Considering a case study**. Similar to the storytelling approach, this technique asks you to identify a single person or occurrence relevant to your topic that represents a bigger trend you will discuss.
- **Relating a real or imaginary dialogue**. To help your readers acclimate to the conversation themselves, show them how people might talk about your topic. This also provides a good opportunity to demonstrate the stakes of the issue- why does it matter, and to whom?
- **Establishing a juxtaposition**. You might compare two seemingly unlike ideas, things, or questions, or contrast two seemingly similar ideas, things, or questions in order to clarify your path of inquiry and to challenge your readers' assumptions about those ideas, things or questions.

Here's an example of a student's placeholder introduction in their draft, followed by a revised version using the scene description approach from above. He tried out a few of the strategies above before settling on the scene description for his revision. Notice how the earlier version "buries the lede," as one might say- hides the most interesting, relevant, or exciting detail. By contrast, the revised version is active, visual, and engaging.

Original:

Every year over 15 million people visit Paris, more than any other city in the world. Paris has a rich, artistic history, stunning architecture and decadent mouth-watering food. Almost every visitor here heads straight for the Eiffel Tower ("Top destinations" 2014). Absorbing the breathtaking view, towering over the metropolis below, you might notice soething missing from the Parisian world, most mega cities have hundreds of towering skyscrapers, but here in Paris, the vast majority of buildings are less than six stories tall (Davies 2010). The reason lies deep below the surface in the Paris underground where an immense cave system filled with dead bodies is attracting a different kind of vistor.[110]

Revised:

On a frigid day in December of 1774, residents of a small walled district in Paris watched in horror as the ground before them began to crack and shit. Within seconds a massive section of road collapsed, leaving behind a gaping chasm where RUe d'Enfer

(Hell Street) once stood. Residents peeked over the edge into a black abyss that has since become the stuff of wonder and nightmares. What had been unearthed that cold day in December, was an ancient tunnel system now known as The Empire of the Dead.[111]

You may notice that neither of these model introductions articulates a thesis statement or a research question. How would you advise this student to transition into a central, unifying insight of their paper?

Conclusions

A close second to introductions, in terms of difficulty, are conclusions. Due to the **recency effect**, readers are more likely to remember your conclusion than most of the rest of your essay.

Most of us have been trained to believe that a conclusion repeats your thesis and main arguments, perhaps in different words, to remind the reader what they just read- or to **fluff** up page counts.

This is a misguided notion. True, conclusions shouldn't introduce completely new ideas, but they shouldn't only rehearse everyuthing you've already said. Rather, they should tie up loose ends and leave the reader with an extending thought- something more to meditate on once they've left the world you've created with your essay. Your conclusion is your last chance to speak to your reader on your terms based on the knowledge you have now shared; repeating what you have already established is a wasted opportuniy.

Instead, here are few other possibilities. (You can include all, some, or none of them.)

- **Look back to your introduction**. If you told a story, shared a case study, or described a scene, you might reconsider that story, case study, or scene with the knowledge developed in the course of your paper. Consider the "ouroboros"- the sanke eating its own head. Your conclusion can provide a statisfying cicularity using this tactic.
- **Consider what surprised you in your research process**. What do those surprises teach us about commonsense assumptions about your topic? How might the evolution of your thought on a topic model the evolution you expect from your readers?
- **End with a quote**. A final thought, meaningfully articulated, can make your readers feel settled and satisfied.
- **Propose a call-to-action**. Especially if your path of inquiry is a matter of policy or behavior, tell the reader what they should do now that they have seen the issue from your eyes.
- **Gesture to questions and issues you can't address in the scope of your paper**. You might have had to omit some of your digressive concerns in the interest of focus. What remains to be answered, studied, or considered?

Here's an example of a placeholder conclusion in a draft, followed by a revised version using the "gesture to questions" and "end with a quote" approach from above. You may not be able to tell without reading the rest of the essay, but the original version simply restates the main points of each paragraphs. In addition to being repetitive, the original is also not very exciting, so it does not inspire the reader to keep thinking about the topic. On the other hand, the revised version tries to give the reader more to chew on: it builds from what the paper establishes to provoke more curiosity and lets the subject continue to grow.

Original:

In conclusion, it is likely that the space tourism industry will flourish as long as venture capitalists and the private sector bankroll its development. As noted in this pape, new technology will support space tourism and humans are always curious to see new places. Space tourism is currently very expensive but it will become more affordable. The FAA and other government agencies will make sure it is regulated and safe.

Revised:

It has become clear that the financial, regulatory, and technological elements of space tourism industry will raise more and more questions: Will the ability to leave our blue marble exacerbate income inequity? If space tourism is restricted to those who can afford exorbitant costs, then it is quite possible that the less privileged will remain earthbound. Moreover, should our history of earthly colonization worry us for the fate of our universe? These questions and others point to an urgent constraint: space tourism might be logistically feasible, but can we ensure that what we imagine will be ethical? According to Carl Sagan, "Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were. But without it we go nowhere" (2).[112]

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9.5: Evaluating Source Credibility

Not all information is good information.

You may have noticed this truth with the recent “fake news” trends. Just because it’s published somewhere, whether online or in a print article, doesn’t make it fact.

This is important to remember when writing your research paper. Developing a quality and academically excellent paper requires resources that both support your thesis and maintain accuracy.

Dana Lynn Driscoll and Allen Brizee (2013) from Purdue Owl Writing Lab note the importance of evaluating your sources:

Evaluating sources is an important skill. It’s been called an art as well as work—much of which is detective work. You have to decide where to look, what clues to search for, and what to accept. Learning how to evaluate effectively is a skill you need both for your course papers and for your life.

Here, we explore the two vital steps of finding and evaluating resources for writing papers.

1. FINDING SOURCES

Years ago, research for a report or paper was most often completed in a physical library building. You would have stacks of books that you looked up by call number from the librarian’s card catalogs. Historical information was available through archives the librarian would find. You’d look up articles from an actual newspaper or journal, smudged ink marks and all.

Now, with an increasingly online research system, things have changed. Looking up books in a library has become easier with databases, online library catalogs and subject guides. You can now do your research almost any time from anywhere.

However, whether you're researching online or in-person, your school’s library is your best first step. Our librarian can help you find sources quickly and efficiently. They’re still the best ally in your hunt for research. By searching through your school’s services, you can ensure that the sources you find are journal articles, books and other quality resources, unlike a questionable website or magazine article. Browse through subject guides and catalogs to more easily locate materials related to your research topic.

You can also find quality sources by browsing through databases offered through our school’s library services. These reliable databases will help point you in the direction of finding quality sources you can use to enhance your research paper. Access the library's databases page here

Databases most often work by keywords. It may be helpful to keep track of what words you use to search for in case you need to revisit them. If you’re looking for a particular author or title, you can also search by those fields in most databases.

2. EVALUATING SOURCES WITH THE CRAAP TEST

So you’ve found that passage in a book that has the exact information and quotes that you’re looking for to support your main point. But before you jump ahead and stick that valuable passage in your paper, it’s important to first evaluate the source.

How can you tell if a source is worth including or not? A useful tool is the CRAAP test acronym. Watch the video below for some useful infomation on how to tell if a source is research-paper-worthy...or not!

While evaluating peer-reviewed journal articles doesn't require as much in-depth critique as a website found through a search engine, it's still important to ensure the integrity of the source you wish to include. This process validates your information and also builds your credibility as a writer. It will be useful to evaluate all sources you're considering by the criteria below:

Currency: the timeliness of the information

- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Is the information current or out-of date for your topic?
- Are the links functional?

Relevance: the importance of the information for your needs

- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is one you will use?
- Would you be comfortable using this source for a research paper?

Authority: the source of the information

- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- Are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's qualifications to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or e-mail address?
- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source?
    - examples:
        - .com (commercial), .edu (educational), .gov (U.S. government)
        - .org (nonprofit organization), or
        - .net (network)

Accuracy: the reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content

- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
- Does the language or tone seem biased and free of emotion?
- Are there spelling, grammar, or other typographical errors?

Purpose: the reason the information exists

- What is the purpose of the information? to inform? teach? sell? entertain? persuade?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Is the information fact? opinion? propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?

If you deem the source valid and relatable to your paper, include it in your working bibliography

PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY SOURCES

When finding and evaluating sources, it's important to note the distinction between primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are those that give a first-hand account of the topic. They often come in the form of interviews, historical records or statistical data. Secondary sources offer analysis and further discussion based on the primary source. These are often peer-reviewed journal articles and books.

RESEARCH TIPS FOR SCHOOL AND BEYOND

Finding and evaluating your sources prior to including them in your research paper takes time. It would be easier to quickly look up an article in your search engine and pull out a great—but perhaps misleading—quote or statistic.

But ensuring the quality of your sources, whether a research paper for school, a summary for your boss, or an annual report for your non-profit organization, is vital to your credibility as an author. Take the time and do the research right.

FIND QUALITY RESOURCES AT THE LIBRARY

As a student here, you have access to a wide variety of helpful resources and tools through the library. Whether on-campus or online, you can quickly and easily find books, journal articles and other resources to ace that next assignment. View library resources here

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9.6: Finding sources- Academic databases

As a student in college, you're lucky because you have access to an amazing wealth of solid research sources via free access to academic databases. What's a database? It's a search engine for sources that are usually only found in print: academic journals, magazines, and newspapers.

You know what magazines and newspapers are, but you might not have a lot of experience with academic journals. Journals, such as the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and *The Lancet*, are where experts in a field publish their studies. These essays are peer reviewed, meaning that other experts read the studies and agree that the findings therein are correct. What this means for YOU is that an academic journal is often a great source for your essay. The scientific journals are especially helpful.

The other sources found in databases, magazines and newspapers are also good sources. The best thing about looking for, say, a newspaper article on a database rather than online is that in a database, the access is free and goes back for years and years. When you look online at a newspaper, sometimes you can only search so far in the past or can only look at a few articles before you have to pay for access. No, thank you! Use the databases instead.

When using a database, use search terms like for an internet search engine. Don't ask questions, however. Remove unnecessary words, like "the" or "in". For example, you might Google "What are the main symptoms of Lyme disease?", but in an academic database, you would search "symptoms Lyme disease."

There are a variety of other ways to limit your searches. If you do an "advanced search," you could search "Lyme disease" AND "symptoms" AND "Minnesota." You can often limit the results based on published dates. For example, by looking at just 2016 and 2017. You can limit your results by "Full text," meaning that all the search results will be the full articles. Sometimes you only get an abstract, which is a summary of the article, and if you want the whole thing, you need to do an interlibrary loan, something your librarian can help you with.

Speaking of librarians, use them! They are specially trained to be experts on research strategies and love to help students who are proactive about finding solid sources. Conduct your research in the library where it's quiet, the resources are free, and live human help is right there for you.

The other great thing about an academic database? It will create a full citation for you, so you don't have to worry about starting from scratch to create it yourself. Of course, it's your responsibility to double-check the correctness of the citation generated by the database, but it's likely to be right.

Finding sources: Print books, magazines, and journals

While you're in the library, why not search through the available print materials? You can't get much more scholarly than a good old-fashioned published book. Plus, some topics that don't change a great deal (such as the geology of Minnesota or anatomy) lend themselves better to book research.

Print books can be wonderful. Though it might seem intimidating to think about looking at an entire book, worry not: use the Table of Contents in the front of the book or the Index in the back as a way to ferret out the sections in the book that will be useful for your research.

What about magazines and journal articles? Though you can find more magazine and journal articles in an academic database than you're likely to find in print in your library, sometimes browsing through those print sources can spark other ideas; you might run across information in a journal you didn't previously think about, or sometimes your eyes get tired of staring at a computer and you need to rest them by looking at a printed page. Whatever the reason, it's worth looking at the printed resources in your library.

Finding sources: Interviews

Probably one of the most often overlooked resources when doing research is to use other people. Why not talk to a person, or interview them via email? Specifically, why not talk to an expert on the topic you're researching? Who better to learn about Lyme disease from than a doctor or someone who has it? These experts can provide solid information that can also put a personal touch on the topic.

There are a few things to be careful of when considering a person to interview, though:

- The person should actually be an expert. Your cousin might know a friend who had a brother whose friend has Lyme disease. The cousin is NOT an expert, and neither is the brother; only the person who has it is the expert. Also, don't confuse usage with expertise: a friend might use Snapchat constantly, but that doesn't mean she's an expert (except, perhaps, being an expert on addiction to social media).
- Ask with plenty of lead time and explain what you're doing. People are busy. How would you like it if a random person contacted you with a bunch of questions they needed answers to tomorrow? You'd ignore that person. Instead, make it easy for the expert to help you out:
    - Say who you are, what you're doing, and how you got the expert's contact information (it's especially good when you've been referred to the person by a common acquaintance—that's networking at its finest).
    - Explain when you need the information (at least a week ahead of time).
    - If you'd like to meet in person, give as much lead time as possible and as many time options as possible.
    - Include your list of questions. You shouldn't overwhelm the expert: give him or her five questions or so.
    - Give the expert several ways of getting ahold of you; a return email is likely, but offer a phone number for the person to call or text if that's more comfortable.
    - Always thank the expert for his or her time. Remember, time is a valuable resource!
- If it's an email conversation, cite as an email source. If conducting the interview in person, it's cited as a personal interview.

Tips on interviews

There are also several things to consider when you're creating a list of interview questions:

- What's the purpose of your research? Focus in on a specific aspect of the topic that needs an expert's ideas. DON'T rely on an expert for *everything* you need in your research.
- Don't overwhelm your expert with a huge list of questions. Three to five questions is a "polite" number: this would get enough information but wouldn't be an overwhelming number for your expert to answer.
- When writing questions, phrase them so they are open-ended and neutral.
    - Closed-ended questions get a limited amount of information. For example: *Does this hospital have a policy on hand washing?*
    - Open-ended questions allow for expansion. For example: *What are the hospital policies on hand washing, and how have employees responded to those policies?*
    - Leading questions suggest an answer and can demonstrate an incorrect assumption that can make your interview subject feel negatively about you and the interview. **Don't ask leading questions.** For example: *Some employees here have been angry about the hand washing policies, right?*
    - Neutral questions are best; they're just looking for information. The open ended example questions above are neutral.
- When asking questions, make sure they're organized in the same order you're planning on using the information in your essay. That makes your life much easier when you're going to use it. For example, if you're talking with someone who has had chronic Lyme disease, it would be worth putting your questions in chronological order:
    - When did you first notice symptoms that made you go to the doctor?
    - When did you receive your diagnosis? Was it difficult to get that diagnosis?
    - What was your treatment plan?
    - How are you still feeling the effects of your Lyme disease?

- Use this interview information just like other sources: by quoting, paraphrasing or summarizing, and be sure to cite the information, too. In MLA, you cite an interview of John Lennon as:

  Lennon, John. Personal Interview. January 1, 2018

Finding sources: Videos, podcasts, and audio sources

As you're conducting your research, consider utilizing non-print sources such as videos or radio programs. TED Talks, Youtube lecture series, National Public Radio, and specialized podcasts can be excellent sources of information and can help break up all the reading you're doing. Just as you'd do when searching online, though, make sure the sources you're using are appropriately useful and academic.

Just as anyone can start a blog and spout off their opinions on any subject under the sun, anyone can make a YouTube video and do the same.

Beware of bias.

The Website Litmus Test:
How to tell if the website you're looking at is credible or not

There's a huge amount of information out there on the web, so it can be difficult to tell whether a website is credible or if it's biased or just plain wrong. Here are some things to look for when surfing for credible material on the internet:

1. The website has an author. A website doesn't *have* to have an author to be credible, but it helps.
2. The website author has a biography of his/her credentials.
3. The website comes from a source that's reputable (e.g. a well-known college or university or an unbiased news organization)
4. The website looks boring. Silly fonts, colors, pictures, advertisements, etc., can show a lack of professionalism.
5. The information on the website makes sense. If you find a website with information that shocks you on your topic, beware. It could very well be biased.
6. It's grammatically perfect. A website that has a bunch of misspellings and run-on sentences is not to be trusted (keep in mind that effect on the reader when it comes to your writing, too!!).
7. The website has links to other reputable sources.
8. The information on the website is unbiased. Obviously, neutral information is good information to have. It's not bad to use information from personal blog postings or other biased sources, but you must acknowledge that information as biased and not as fact; otherwise, it will reflect poorly on you as a writer.
9. Watch out for the .com endings. .edu, .gov, and .org endings to websites can provide more credible information.

And, finally, one big DON'T: Don't rely on Wikipedia. This editable-by-anyone encyclopedia is helpful for very basic information, but you've probably chosen a topic about which you should already know the basic information, so it's not helpful that way. The way it IS helpful is to look at the end of the article for a list of sources: those sources can be useful for future research.

Keep in mind that none of the items listed above are deal-breakers (and it's not even an exhaustive list!). Also, the above could just as well say **The website and app litmus test** these days. When you start to see several of these red flags, though, and you're starting to get the feeling in your gut that this source might not be good, move on. There are many, many, *many* more sources in the online sea.

It is not a huge deal to use a biased source, but you must acknowledge it as such in the writing or risk being dismissed by your readers. Again, audience is key.

Finding sources: Pictures

Sometimes a judicious insertion of a picture can help break up a text, or orient the reader, or give a visual cue. Graphic artists are often employed by firms to do the visuals of a text, once the writers have written the text. For most college writing courses, visuals are not required, as creating visual art is usually thought of as a separate skill. But you should be aware of the possibility for needing visuals. For example, in much science writing, graphs and charts are very important parts of the text.

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9.7: Reading sources

One of the most daunting tasks of research is not finding the sources themselves but actually reading them. Even if you're a person who loves reading, doing so for pleasure is not the same fact-finding mission that the research mindset requires. When you're reading for research, you're a detective, looking for clues in the world that will support your pre-set idea about a topic. When you think about it in those terms, reading requires a different set of skills. Sure, it might be different than reading a novel, but it can be easily practiced and will not require you to read carefully from beginning to end. You can get the information you need without making it too difficult on yourself.

Critical reading of sources

So, let's say you're looking at a printout of a journal article you found on an academic database. It's long—over ten pages!—but you know it's got information you'd like to use in your essay. How do you wade through it, knowing you'll need to go through many other sources just like it?

First, get clear in your brain what your purpose is with this piece. What information are you looking for, exactly? Perhaps your purpose isn't to find information. Maybe you want to figure out how this piece is organized to get inspiration for your own piece's organization. You might also be trying to figure out the merits of this particular writer's arguments. Whatever it is you're doing, make sure you've got that clearly in your mind before you start.

Now, it's time to start reading. Your initial impulse might be to start at the beginning and read all the way through. You could do this, of course. Along the way, you might highlight especially useful information, perhaps underlining unknown words to look up later or summarizing in a few words what each paragraph is about. This engagement with the text is important: it keeps you from getting bored and makes it easier later on when you want to review the source again and aren't especially interested in re-reading again from the beginning (who would be?). When you're done, you might immediately summarize the source on a separate sheet of paper, recalling the most important information you remember from the text.

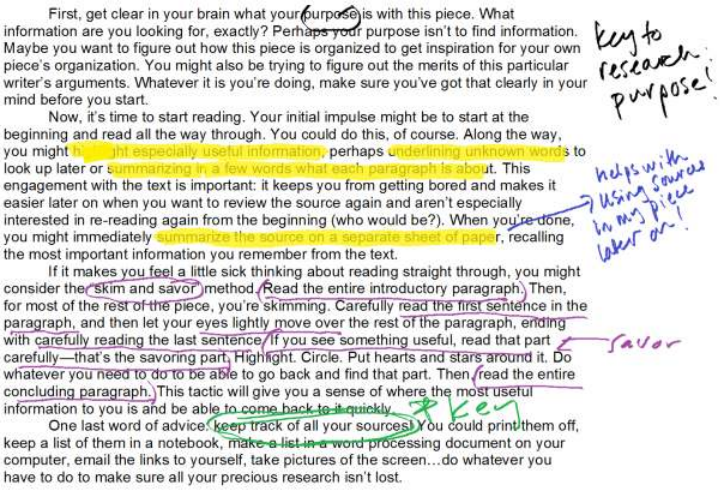
If it makes you feel a little sick thinking about reading straight through, you have a few options. First, why not just find the thesis statement (or, in a medical study journal article, start by looking at the end where it will have a section titled something like "experiment results"). By reading the central argument of the academic source first, you can decide whether or not you need it. And remember, this is what people will do with your argument research paper, as well!

Second, you might consider the "skim and savor" method. Read the entire introductory paragraph. Then, for most of the rest of the piece, you're skimming. Carefully read the first sentence in the paragraph, and then let your eyes lightly move over the rest of the paragraph, ending with carefully reading the last sentence. If you see something useful, read that part carefully—that's the savoring part. Highlight. Circle. Put hearts and stars around it. Do whatever you need to do to be able to go back and find that part. Then, read the entire concluding paragraph. This tactic will give you a sense of where the most useful information to you is and be able to come back to it quickly.

One last word of advice: keep track of all your sources! You could print them off, keep a list of them in a notebook, make a list in a word processing document on your computer, email the links to yourself, take pictures of the screen, use an archive like Evernote or Pinterest to collect and organize research…do whatever you have to do to make sure all your precious research isn't lost.

So, read, read, read, listen, listen, listen, search, search, search, watch, watch, watch. Take notes. Toss out the stupid stuff and find what is useful. Get good at reading and clicking through your phone to find things.

Example: Annotating a text



First, get clear in your brain what your purpose is with this piece. What information are you looking for, exactly? Perhaps your purpose isn't to find information. Maybe you want to figure out how this piece is organized to get inspiration for your own piece's organization. You might also be trying to figure out the merits of this particular writer's arguments. Whatever it is you're doing, make sure you've got that clearly in your mind before you start.

Now, it's time to start reading. Your initial impulse might be to start at the beginning and read all the way through. You could do this, of course. Along the way, you might highlight especially useful information, perhaps underlining unknown words to look up later or summarizing in a few words what each paragraph is about. This engagement with the text is important: it keeps you from getting bored and makes it easier later on when you want to review the source again and aren't especially interested in re-reading again from the beginning (who would be?). When you're done, you might immediately summarize the source on a separate sheet of paper, recalling the most important information you remember from the text.

If it makes you feel a little sick thinking about reading straight through, you might consider the skim and savor method. Read the entire introductory paragraph. Then, for most of the rest of the piece, you're skimming. Carefully read the first sentence in the paragraph, and then let your eyes lightly move over the rest of the paragraph, ending with carefully reading the last sentence. If you see something useful, read that part carefully—that's the savoring part. Highlight. Circle. Put hearts and stars around it. Do whatever you need to do to be able to go back and find that part. Then read the entire concluding paragraph. This tactic will give you a sense of where the most useful information to you is and be able to come back to it quickly.

One last word of advice: keep track of all your sources! You could print them off, keep a list of them in a notebook, make a list in a word processing document on your computer, email the links to yourself, take pictures of the screen…do whatever you have to do to make sure all your precious research isn't lost.

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9.8: Using sources

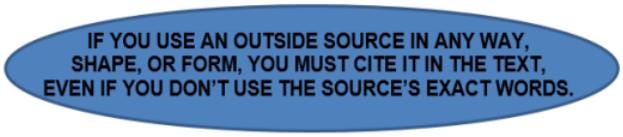
Quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing sources

First, a note: it is difficult to talk about quoting, summarizing and paraphrasing without also talking about in-text citation, which is where you say where you got the information that's being quoted, summarized, or paraphrased. Therefore, you'll see in text citations (and full citations at the end of this section) for the source used as you must always cite outside sources when they're used in a piece of writing.

More information about citation—in the writing itself as well as for a Work Cited (MLA) or References (APA) page—will be linked in the section that follows.

Proper quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing aren't just about grammatical correctness; using them is a fine art. You can choose which of the three you want to use at certain times in your work to support your ideas. They all have different effects, so as you're learning what they are and practicing, consider how a quote's effect might be different than a summary's effect, which are both different than a paraphrase.

Before we say anything else, though, we have to tell you that the number one thing to remember when using research in any paper is this:



All right. Now, let's get down to business:

Quoting sources

Quoting is the easiest way of incorporating outside sources. Unfortunately, because it is the easiest way, it is also not necessarily the best way.

People sometimes have the tendency to dump a bunch of quotes in their papers and think that'll make them look smart. Trust me; it doesn't. Too much quoting will make you look like you don't care, you're lazy, and/or you don't have an original thought of your own, and it also puts several different styles of writing in the same piece, which can interrupt the flow of ideas and read awkwardly. Sometimes, however, quoting is the most effective way of getting the information down, so if you must, be sure to use the author's exact words and put quotation marks around it.

Example: Mentioning the author before the quote*:

> **MLA:** An example of the difficulty of writing papers appears in *Sweet Agony* by Gene Olson: "There is no more demanding task than writing. No matter how long one works at it, no matter how many words are produced, room for improvement will always remain" (13).
>
> **APA:** An example of the difficulty of writing papers appears in *Sweet Agony* by Olson (1972): "There is no more demanding task than writing. No matter how long one works at it, no matter how many words are produced, room for improvement will always remain" (p. 13).

***Note:** The phrase "An example of the difficulty of writing papers appears in *Sweet Agony* by Gene Olson:" is called a signal phrase or tag. Other examples of signal phrases are "Olson states," "Olson claims that" and "Olson suggests." There are many others, too. These phrases help to introduce source material in quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing. Thoughtful use of tags is important to help cite correctly as well as encourage the flow of your writing.

Example: The same quote without mentioning the author before it. In this example, the citation information follows the quote, in parenthesis:

> **MLA:** "There is no more demanding task than writing. No matter how long one works at it, no matter how many words are produced, room for improvement will always remain" (Olson 13).

APA: “There is no more demanding task than writing. No matter how long one works at it, no matter how many words are produced, room for improvement will always remain” (Olson, 1972, p. 13).

Consider the effect of citing in the parentheses versus using a tag in the sentence itself. If it’s the first time you’re using a source in the text, it’s not a bad idea to use a tag; after that, you can do either.

Quoting sources: Long quotes

For essays written using the MLA documentation style, quotes that are more than four typed lines (not sentences, but *lines as they appear on the page*), or for essays written using the APA documentation style, quotes that are more than 40 *words* (or longer), make a block quote. Check this out:

MLA: Writing is difficult. Everybody knows this. It has been said over and over through the centuries. As Gene Olson states:

> There is no more demanding task than writing. No matter how long one works at it, no matter how many words are produced, room for improvement will always remain. Herein lies the ultimate frustration of writing; herein also lies its bittersweet charm and challenge. It’s like chasing butterflies in a world where there are always more butterflies, each new batch prettier than the last. (13)

APA: Basically the same thing, but use “Olson (1972)” in the tag and (p. 13) in the parentheses.

Note that the indenting takes the place of quotes. Block quotes should be used sparingly, as they break up the flow of the paper and can cause reader impatience.

Finally, when using quotes, make sure you set up the quote in the text with your own ideas and after the quote, interpret it in some way for the reader, such as discussing how it fits in with your other ideas. That will help the reader understand the quote itself and make you more credible to the reader.

Quoting sources: Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is when you take an exact quote and put it into your own words and writing style, capturing the same ideas as the original. It is approximately as long as the original as you go sentence-by-sentence, putting the original **all in your own words.** Quotation marks go around the exact phrasing that is borrowed from the original, and paraphrases are always cited.

Original quote: “There is no more demanding task than writing. No matter how long one works at it, no matter how many words are produced, room for improvement will always remain” (Olson 13).

Paraphrase using **MLA**: As Gene Olson states in Sweet Agony, writing can take a lot out of a person. One can write long and hard, coming up with a ton of text, but one can always do better (13).

APA: Follow the same rules as quoting in APA.

See that? It’s the same idea as the original and the same length, but different words. Can you see how this might have a different effect on a reader than a direct quote?

In case you were wondering, here's an example of the original quote paraphrased poorly:

Poor paraphrase: Writing is a demanding task. One works a long time at it and produces many words, but there's always room for improvement.

This is not good because it is too close to the original, using many of the same words and phrases, and it's also missing a citation. This would be considered plagiarism.

Quoting sources: Summarizing

Summaries do just that: they sum up the main idea or spirit of the original text. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original text. Though there are no quotation marks (unless you use some of the exact phrasing from the original), you still cite.

Original quote: “There is no more demanding task than writing. No matter how long one works at it, no matter how many words are produced, room for improvement will always remain” (Olson 13).

Summary in MLA: Writing is difficult, mostly because it can always be better (Olson 13).

Summary in APA: Writing is difficult, mostly because it can always be better (Olson, 1972, p. 13).

This page titled 9.8: Using sources is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Alexandra Glynn, Kelli Hallsten-Erickson & Amy Jo Swing.

9.11: Model Texts by Student Authors

Model Texts by Student Authors:

Review the annotated bibliographies and research papers (written by real students!) in the sections below. These works were reprinted with the permission of the student authors. To save space in our textbook, these essays do not reflect MLA paper format. Please note that you would need to change the format for these essays (including headers, double line spacing, and a hanging indent for the works cited page) to meet MLA requirements.

I. Model Annotated Bibliographies

What Does It Mean to Be Educated?[113]

Broton, K. and Sara Goldrick-Rab. "The Dark Side of College (Un)Affordability: Food and Housing Insecurity in Higher Education." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2016, pp. 16-25. *Taylor & Francis*, doi: 10.1080/00091383.2016.1121081.

This article shines a light on food and housing insecurity in higher education. It makes the argument that not having adequate meals or shelter increase the likelihood of receiving poorer grades and not finishing your degree program. There are a few examples of how some colleges and universities have set up food pantries and offer other types of payment plan or assistance programs. It also references a longitudinal study that follows a group of students from higher education through college and provides supporting data and a compelling case study. This is a useful article for those that would like to bring more programs like these to their campus. This article is a good overview of the problem, but could go a step further and provide starter kits for this interested in enacting a change in their institution.

Davis, Joshua. "A Radical Way of Unleashing a Generation of Geniuses." *Wired*, 15 October 2013, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html.

This article profiles a teacher in a small school in an impoverished area of Mexico. He has created a space where students are encouraged to learn by collaborating and testing, not by lecture. The article ties the current system of learning to be rooted in the industrial age, but goes on to note that this is negative because they have not adapted to the needs of companies in the modern age. This article is particularly useful to provide examples of how relinquishing control over a classroom is beneficial. It also has a timeline of alternative teaching theorists and examples of schools that are breaking the mold of traditional education. My only critique of the article is that, although it presents numerous examples of a changing education system, it is very negative regarding the prospects for education.

Davis, Lois M., and Robert Bozick, Jennifer L. Steele, Jessica Saunders, and Jeremy N.V. Miles. *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults*. RAND, 2013, www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html.

This meta-analysis from the RAND Corporation, a non-partisan think tank, reviews research done on the topic of education in correctional institutions. The facts show that when incarcerated people have access to education, recidivism drops, career prospects improve, and taxpayers save money. There are differences based on the type of education (vocational versus general education) and the methods (using technology had better outcomes). It is interesting that the direct cost of education was offset by the reduced recidivism rate, to the point where it is more cost effective to educate inmates. This analysis would be particularly useful for legislators and correctional institution policy makers. I did not see in this research any discussion of student selection; I believe there may be some skewed data if the people choosing to attend education may already be more likely to have positive outcomes.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Complete Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Wm. H. Wise & Co., 1929.

In this collection of writing, Emerson insists that primary inspiration comes from nature and education is the vehicle that will "awaken" him to the knowledge of this fact." Emerson sees the nonchalance of children as something to aspire to, which should be left alone. He is critical of parents (and all adults) in diminishing the independence of children. This source is particularly useful when considering the alignment of educators and pupils. Emerson contends that true genius is novel and is not understood unless there is proper alignment between educators and pupils. I think this is a valuable source for pupils by increasing their level of "self-trust."

Gladwell, Malcolm. *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits and the Art of Battling Giants*, Little, Brown & Co., 2014.

Malcolm Gladwell generally has some interesting takes on the world at large. In this book he looks at what is considered a strength and where it may originate. The most interesting part of his argument, I believe, is that which states that a perceived deficiency, like dyslexia, may serve as a catalyst for increased ability in another area. Gladwell says that compensation learning can be achieved when there is a desirable difficulty. This book, and much of Gladwell's work, can be especially useful for those which want to look beyond the surface of the world to make sense of seemingly random data. Much of the book rang true to me since I have had an especially hard time reading at an adequate speed, but can listen to an audiobook and recite it almost verbatim in an essay.

Hurley, J. Casey. "What Does It Mean to Be Educated?" *Midwestern Educational Researcher*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2011, p.2-4.

In his keynote speech, the speaker sets forth an argument for his understanding of an "educated" person. The six virtues he espouses are: understanding, imagination, strength, courage, humility, and generosity. These, he states, can lift a person past the baseline of human nature which is instinctively "ignorant, intellectually incompetent, weak, fearful of truth, proud and selfish" (3). I prefer this definition over any other that I have come across. I have been thinking a bit about the MAX attacks and how Micah Fletcher has responded to the attention he has received. I am proud to see a 21 year old respond with the level of awareness around social justice issues that he carries. These traits that he exemplifies, would not likely exist in this individual if not for the education he has received at PSU.

Introduction to El Sistema. Annenberg Learner Firm, 2014. *Films Media Group*, 2016.

This video profiles El Sistema. El Sistema was designed in Venezuela by José Antonio Abreu in 1975 as a method for teaching social citizenship. The method is to have groups of children learn how to play orchestral music. It is community-based (parents participate) and more experienced members of the group are expected to teach younger students. in Venezuela, this program is government-funded as a social program, not an arts program. This video would be useful for those that are interested in how arts can be used for social change. I thought it was interesting that one of the first tasks that groups perform is to construct a paper violin. I am a fan of breaking down a complicated item, like the instrument, to its constituent parts.

Petrosino, Anthony and Carolyn Turpin- Petrosino, and John Buehler. "'Scared Straight' and Other Juvenile Awareness Programs for Preventing Juvenile Delinquency." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 589, 2003, pp.41-62. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD002796.pub2

This article is a meta-analysis of Scared Straight and similar crime deterrence programs. These programs were very popular when I was in high school and are still in use today. The analysis shows that these programs actually increase the likelihood for crime, which is the opposite effect of the well-meaning people that implement such programs. This is particularly useful for those that are contemplating implementing such a program. Also, it is a good example of how analysis should drive decisions around childhood education. I do remember programs like this from when I was in high school, but I was not because I was not considered high-risk enough at the time. It would be interesting to see if the data is detailed enough to see if selection bias affected some of the high rates of incarceration for these offenders.

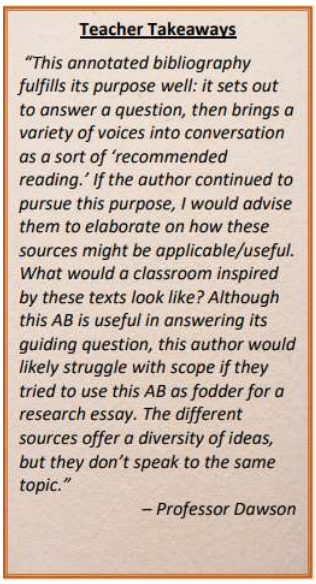
Robinson, Ken. "Do Schools Kill Creativity?" *TED*, February 2006, https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity

In this video Ken Robinson simply states that creativity is as important as literacy. Creativity, he defines, as "the process of having original ideas that have value." Robinson states that children are regrettably "educated out of creativity" and that is imperative that we do not stigmatize failure. To emphasize this point he gives an example of a cohort of children which would retire in 2065, but no one can possibly imagine what the world may look like then. This piece is particularly useful for the fact that it highlights the ways creativity may be stifled or encouraged. There are is a bit of conflating of creativity and ADHD in this video, but in either case the message is to listen and encourage the pupil as a whole being.

Smith, Karen. "Decolonizing Queer Pedagogy." *Journal of Women and Social Work*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2013, pp. 468-470. *SAGE*, doi: 10.1177/0886109913505814.

in Karen Smith's essay, the purpose of education- at least the course entitled Queer Theories and Identities- is to "interrupt queer settler colonialism by challenging students to study the ways in which they inherit colonial histories and to insist that they critically question the colonial institutions through which their rights are sought" (469). This particular course is then, going beyond simply informing pupils, but attempting to interrupt oppressive patriarchal systems. This article is particularly useful as an example of

education as social activism. This theme is not one that is explored greatly in other works and looks at education as a means of overthrowing the system, instead of pieces which may looking at increasing an individual's knowledge or their contribution to society.



Pirates & Anarchy[114]

"About Rose City Antifa." Rose City Antifa. rosecityantifa.org/about/.

The "about" page of Rose City Antifa's website has no author or date listed. It is referenced as a voice in the conversation around current political events. This is the anarchic group that took disruptive action during the Portland May Day rally, turning the peaceful demonstration into a destructive riot. This page on their website outlines some core beliefs regarding what they describe as the oppressive nature of our society's structure. They specifically point to extreme right wing political groups, so-called neo-nazis, as the antithesis of what antifa stands for. Along with this, they state that they acknowledge the frustration of "young, white, working-class men." Antifa as a group intends to give these men a meaningful culture to join that doesn't include racism in its tenets, but seeks freedom and equality for all. Action is held in higher regards than rhetoric. This voice is important to this body of research as a timely and local consideration on how anarchy and anarchic groups relate to piratical acts in the here and now.

Chappell, Bill. "Portland Police Arrest 25, Saying a May Day Rally Devolved into 'Riot'." *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, National Public Radio, 2 May 2017, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/05/02/526532023/portland-police-arrest-25-saying-a-may-day-rally-devolved-into-riot.

This very short news report documents the events at the Portland May Day Rally this past May 2nd. What began as a peaceful rally for workers' rights became a violent protest when it was taken over by a self-described anarchist group. The group vandalized property, set fires, and hurled objects at police. This is an example of recent riots by local anarchist groups that organize interruptions of other political group's permitted demonstrations in order to draw attention to the anarchist agenda. The value of this report is that it shows that anarchy is still a philosophy adopted by certain organizations that are actively seeking to cause disruption in political conversation.

Dawdy, S. L. & J. Bonni. "Towards a General Theory of Piracy." *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 85, no. 3, 2012, pp. 673-699. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/anq.2012.0043.

Comparisons are drawn between Golden Age pirates and current intellectual pirates in this in-depth article looking at piracy over time. The authors offer a definition of piracy as "a form of morally ambiguous property seizure committed by an organized group which can include thievery, hijacking, smuggling, counterfeiting, or kidnapping" (675). They also state that pirates are "organizations of social bandits" going on to discuss piracy as a rebellion against capitalist injustices (696). The intentional anarchic nature of the acts committed are a response to being left behind economically by political structures. The authors conclude with a warning that "we might look for a surge in piracy in both representation and action as an indication that a major turn of the

wheel is about to occur" (696) These anthropological ideas reflect the simmering political currents we are experiencing now in 2017. Could the multiple recent bold acts of anarchist groups portend more rebellion in our society's future? The call for jobs and fair compensation are getting louder and louder in western countries. If political structures cannot provide economic stability, will citizens ultimately decide to tear it all down? The clarity of the definitions in this article are helpful in understanding what exactly is a pirate and what their presence may mean to society at large.

Hirshleifer, Jack. "Anarchy and Its Breakdown." *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 103, no.1, 1995, pp. 26-52.

This rather dense article is written around the question of the sustainability of anarchic organizations. The goals and activities are discussed in their most basic form in terms of resource gathering, distribution and defense. it does provide a solid definition of anarchy by stating, "anarchy is a social arrangement in which contenders struggle to conquer and defend durable resources, without effective regulation by either higher authorities or social arrangement in which contenders struggle to conquer and defend durable resources, there is not hierarchy of leadership. The author does discuss the fragility of these groups as well. Agreement on a social contract is challenging as is remaining cohesive and resisting merging with other groups with different social contracts. This element of agreement on structure make sense in terms of piratical organizations. Captains are captains at the pleasure of the crew so long as his/her decision making enables the group as a whole to prosper. The anarchy definition is useful to bring understanding on what ties these groups together.

Houston, Chloe, editor. *New Worlds Reflected: Travel and Utopia in the Early Modern Period*, Ashgate, 2010.

This book, which is a collection of essays, explores the idea of utopia. The editor describes it in the introduction as "an ideal place which does not exist"- a notion that there is in human nature a desire to discover the "perfect" place, but that location is not attainable (1). The desire itself is key because of the exploration it sparks. There are three parts to the book, the second being "Utopian Communities and Piracy." This section mostly contains essays that relate to explorations for the New World and pirate groups' contributions that either helped or hindered the success of such expeditions. While there is much that is interesting here, especially in terms of "utopia" as a motivator, there is not much that lends information on piratical exploits. I'll likely not use this source in my essay.

"I am Not a Pirate." *This American Life*, episode 616, National Public Radio, 5 May 2017, https://m.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/616/i-am-not-a-pirate.

This podcast showcased three examples of pirates, discussing the circumstances surrounding their choice to enter that world and the consequences that befell them. One example was a gentleman pirate from the early 1700s who bit off more than he could chew. Another was a Somali-American who went back to Somalia to help reestablish government in the region and ended up tangled in the gray area between good intention and criminality. The final pirate is a female Chinese pirate from the early 1800s who was so successful that she was able to remake the rules of piracy to her and her crew's great advantage. The information offered in this podcast includes valuable information (especially regarding Somalia) on the opportunities or lack thereof that attract otherwise normal individuals to piracy. The vacuum of ineffectual governance and unfair economic practices both contribute to this. Citizens' determination to be masters of their own destiny results from this lack of central societal structure. They choose desperate measures.

Otto, Lisa. "Benefits of Buccaneering: The Political Economy of Maritime Piracy in Somalia and Kenya." *African Security Review*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2011, pp. 45-52. *Taylor & Francis*, doi: 10.1080/10246029.2011.630809.

The economy of piracy in Somalia is addressed in this article. From the economic vacuum of a failed state leaving citizens to turn to desperate measures, to the eventual organization of piracy into burgeoning industry, perfect conditions existed for the normalization of criminal acts. The article goes on to elaborate on the costs to other industries in the region, to the social structure of Somalia, and the cost in lives lost. Finally, the author makes suggestions for counter-piracy strategies. Interestingly, those suggestions are similar to the efforts that ultimately led to the ending of piracy in Somalia, as referenced in the more recent podcast, "I Am Not a Pirate." Published around 2011, this article predates the demise of the industry after 2012. The research value here is in the economic and social factors that led otherwise average citizens to violent criminality. The decentralization of government in particular leading to clans sanctioning piracy is especially interesting in terms of anarchic political structure.

Samatar, Abdi Ismail, Mark Lindberg, and Basil Mahayni. "The Dialectics of Piracy in Somalia: The Rich Versus the Poor." *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 8, 2010, pp. 1377-1394. *EBSCO*, doi:10.1080/01436597.2010.538238.

This article is similar topically to the Otto article, though it is a much deeper dive into the historical and political events that led to the collapse of the Somali centralized government. It also describes various piratical incidents as the criminal industry became more rampant. There is a list of four conditions that precipitate the foundation of modern piratical groups with similar themes noted in other articles. These should be referenced in my essay. The author also states, "It appears that the patterns of piracy in East Asia, and West and East Africa shadow global economic cycles and reflect the contestation over resources between the powerful and the poor" (1379).The idea of "moral economy" is addressed as the argument is made that a certain portion of Somali pirates are practicing "defensive piracy." This in particular is useful as it outlines the consequences when the people's expectations of government are not met—those expectations being a certain amount of livelihood and security. Citizens in poverty then believe it is their right to rebel when those in power shirk their responsibilities.

Snelders, Stephen, with a preface by Peter Lamborn Wilson. T*he Devil's Anarchy: The Sea Robberies of the Most Famous Pirate Claes G. Compaen and The Very Remarkable Travels of Jan Erasmus Reyning, Buccaneer*, Autonomedia, 2005.

The Devil's Anarchy is a small book of about two hundred pages that outlines the loose societal structures of seafaring pirate groups that shunned hierarchical systems in their ranks. The historical tales of several pirates, including Claes Compaen and Jan Erasmus Reyning, are told. These swashbuckling accounts are full of details describing pirate lifestyles. The truly useful portions of the book are the introduction and the final chapter entitled "The Politics of Piracy." The preface by Peter Wilson discusses ideas of "freedom" as the primary motivator for those seeking this way of life, a dismissal of expected norms of society. The last chapter talks about the ways in which the anarchical approach both helped and hindered various pirate groups. These ideas will be helpful in drawing connections between anarchy and piracy.

Wachhaus, T. Aaron. "Anarchy as a Model for Network Governance." *Public Administration Review*, vol. 72, no. 1, 2011, pp. 33-42. Wiley, doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02481.x.

This author of this article seeks to propose the application of anarchist perspectives onto network studies and theory. There is a shift of mind necessary to turn from hierarchical structures of management to one that is a linkage of groups acting collectively. Several points of direction are listed as suggestions for moving toward this perspective. Repeatedly, the author mentions the necessary strength in the linkages of groups, to provide stability and promote "dynamic" activity and sharing. More research is called for to discover what has made anarchy-oriented groups successful in the past. While this article isn't specific to political groups, it does break down elements of anarchic social structure in a way that provides clarity to how they tend to be organized. There is similar ideas of collective action and sharing of resources, in this case information, and fairness in distribution and contribution of actors in these groups. This will be helpful for synthesizing information on anarchy in application to pirate groups.

Williams, Daniel E. "Refuge Upon the Sea: Captivity and Liberty in *The Florida Pirate*." *Early American Literature*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2001, pp. 71-88. *Project MUSE*, doi: 10.1353/ea1.2001.0009.

This is a review of a text from the 1820's called *The Florida Pirate*. The text tells the tale of a slave that escapes slavery and becomes a pirate— the oppressed becoming the oppressor. His ultimate demise comes when he chooses to set free some captives rather than kill them, which is rewarded with those captives betraying the ex-slave to the authorities. He is then executed. According to the author of the review, it is the slave's personal journey through these incarnations of his personhood that were intended as a condemnation of the institution of slavery. The text was intended to compare slave-owners to pirates in an attempt to highlight the criminal nature of owning humans. While this is a fascinating read, and piques my interest in reading the original text, it is less relevant to my argument. It refers to a fictional work rather than factual events.

Teacher Takeaways

"This annotated bibliography includes very detailed summary with accurate citations. I also like that the student is clearly considering how they will make use of the source in their research essay. If they were to keep working on the annotations, I would ask them to revise with attention to credibility; certainly these sources have different degrees of credibility, and I would like to see more explicit consideration of that."

– Professor Dawson

A Case of Hysterics[115]

Annandale, Ellen. "Missing Connections: Medical Sociology and Feminism." *Medical Sociology Newsletter*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2005, pp. 35-52. *Medical Sociology Online.*

This journal article looks into how society's definition of gender has changed, and how medical sociology needs to change with it. The author proposes that that there is a need to bring feminist theory and genderrelated research on health and illness within medical sociology much closer together than they are at present. Annandale argues that "Within this new single system the common experience of health-related oppression is produced differently, and experienced differently, through systematically driven processes of sex/gender fragmentation" (69). This source is unique because it addresses the concept that gender as we know it today is much different than what it was when Hysteria was a common phrase. Annandale recognizes that sexism in the medical field is prominent, and that sexism reinforces these exhausted gender stereotypes.

——. *Women's Health and Social Change*, Routledge, 2009.

Upon researching for this paper, I've learned that Ellen Annandale is a very reputable source on the topics of feminism, sociology, and epidemiology. In this book, she discusses the relation between women's health and their position in society at the time from the perspective of women writers and feminists. Because of the past negative appraisal of feminine capabilities, she argues that we have been forced into a binary society that is characteristic of our patriarchal past. She boldly defines the system of women's health as a brand of patriarchal capitalism. Interestingly, she also brings forth the knowledge that the gender gap is decreasing in terms of life expectancy. Why has men's life expectancy improved so greatly while women's falls short? Ignorance. This has already proven useful in my research due to the addressing of current health issues that affect both men and women due to sexism.

"Brought to Life: Exploring the History of Medicine – Hysteria." *Science Museum*, www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/techniques/hysteria [Expired link]

This brief web article serves to loosely explain the history of Hysteria as a disease. The author begins with Plato and ends with the eradication of the term hysteria in the mid-1960s. While the article's purpose is to explain where hysteria began and where it has come to, the author offers a brief acknowledgment that the practices are still with us in modern medicine. The author states that modern doctors have merely "cloaked old ideas behind new words." While this source doesn't offer a lot of thesis support, it is useful as a reliable source of facts on the history of Hysteria. This article will be helpful in creating a timeline for the practice of diagnosing women with the disease.

Culp-Ressler, Tara. "When Gender Stereotypes Become a Serious Hazard to Women's Health." *ThinkProgress*, 11 May 2015, archive.thinkprogress.org/whengender-stereotypes-become-a-serious-hazard-to-womens-health-f1f130a5e79/.

In this web article, Culp-Ressler analyzes the widespread and serious effects that gender stereotypes can perpetuate within the medical field. She utilizes individual accounts of women who experienced sexism when seeking medical attention, as well as current studies which further prove the gap that exists between male and female healthcare quality in the United States. Through these detailed experiences, Culp-Ressler argues that the frequent disregard for women's knowledge of their own bodies contributes to both harmful gender stereotypes as well as deadly diseases that go untreated. She states that society is willfully ignorant in their knowledge of female medicine: "This has been going on for centuries... conversion, hysteria, the name changes but it's still the same and it's happening today." This will be useful in that it presents a number of documented cases of misdiagnosis; especially with a common theme in being treated as a mentally ill patient rather than one experiencing pain. Part Three: Research and Argumentation 355 This source follows my argument rather closely, and will be helpful in supporting my thesis.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. "The Yellow Wallpaper." 1892. Archived at U.S. National Library of Medicine, 7 June 2017, www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/theliteratureofprescription/exhibitionAssets/digi talDocs/The-Yellow-Wall-Paper.pdf [also available at www.gutenberg.org/files/1952/1952-h/1952-h.htm].

The Yellow Wallpaper is an important narrative from the early 1900s that illustrates the delusional medical procedures placed onto women. Gilman herself experienced what was called the "rest cure," which in essence confined women who were diagnosed with Hysteria or nervous diseases in a room to do nothing, limiting their "stressors". They were forced to eat copious amounts of food to gain weight, and they were allowed no company. This story is told from the perspective of an insane person, as she herself admittedly nearly slipped into madness. If anything, this piece serves as a firsthand account of the damage done to women in a time when they had less rights, and when women's medicine was seriously lacking. This will be helpful in understanding how these treatments were accepted by the public, as well as noting the unintended effects of said treatments.

——. "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" 1913. Archived at *The College of Staten Island*, City University of New York, 8 June 1999, csivc.csi.cuny.edu/history/files/lavender/whyyw.html [Link expired]. [Also available via The National Library of

Medicine and The American Yawp Reader].

This brief letter was meant to address the many inquiries that Gilman received about her story “The Yellow Wallpaper.” This letter is meant to explain that although she added little “embellishments and additions”, it remains a fully viable account of a woman who fell into madness because of unsound medical advice. Within, she details her nervous breakdowns. She also provides details of the lifestyle she was told to lead in order to keep her nerves at bay: she was given advice to “‘live as domestic a life as far as possible,’ to ‘have but two hours’ intellectual life a day,’ and ‘never to touch pen, brush, or pencil again’ as long as I lived.” Of course, this didn’t work. Just as “The Yellow Wallpaper” is helpful in providing an in depth look at someone experiencing such a treatment, Gilman’s letter is useful in that it was written in a place where she had fully recovered due to not taking her physician’s advice. She also notes that a different physician read her book, and since had ceased prescribing “rest cures”. First-hand accounts of experiences such as these will help provide credibility to my argument.

Gilman, Sander L., et al. *Hysteria beyond Freud*, University of California Press, 1993.

Though this book has five authors contributing, the section titled “Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender” will be the most useful for this paper. In this essay, Elaine Showalter attempts to explain to the reader that although the term “hysteria” was used mainly by men toward females as a negative term, modern women are “reclaiming” the feminine right of hysteria. Feminism was coming more into the mainstream during the early/mid 90s, when this book was published. It is clear that Showalter’s views might not hold true today, because of more recent medical studies confirming the falseness of Hysteria. This piece is interesting because in her attempt to argue the reclamation of hysteria by modern feminists, she succumbs to the long-enforced stereotypes of patriarchal medicine and culture. This source would be helpful to demonstrate the extent to which sexism can reach, internalization of stereotypes is common. While this book might not help in furthering my argument, it is interesting to see women that view Hysteria as a right of femininity and something to be claimed.

Kellogg, John Harvey. *Ladies’ Guide in Health and Disease: Girlhood, Maidenhood, Wifehood, Motherhood*, Modern Medicine Publishing Co., 1896. Archived at *University of North Texas Health Science Center*, 4 March 2011, digitalcommons.hsc.unt.edu/hmedbks/13 [Link expired]. [Also available via https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044025682261&view=1up&seq=11.]

This book’s title screams exactly what its purpose was: describing women’s health risks based on what part of life they were in (all parts centered around the presence or absence of a man). Limiting women to particular and confined social roles was the norm in the early 1900s. This book is so sexist, and so perfect for my paper. Not unlike Emily Post, Kellogg attempts to explain to women the necessary steps they ought to take in order to lead healthy, childbearing lives. Aside from being hilarious, this instruction manual is written by a man, for women, and perfectly demonstrates how sexism has continually permeated the medical field.

Scull, Andrew. *Hysteria: The Disturbing History*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

In this book, Andrew Scull covers a lot of ground as he moves through analyzing the history of Hysteria. His argument centers on a Freudian Hysteria, and how his views (or rather all psychoanalytical views) came to be seen as obsolete but Hysteria still lingers with new vocabulary. Scull also delves into the history of men being diagnosed with Hysteria, or nervous diseases, most specifically due to the Second World War. He notes that as Hysteria was seen as a feminine disease and an affliction of the imagination, these men received little to no treatment - similar to females diagnosed with hysteria. They were seen as cowardly and inferior for something that today would be easily recognizable as post-traumatic stress disorder. This source will be helpful in demonstrating that while the patients were male, they were seen as contracting a feminine disease that was “made up in the mind,” therefore hindering the help that they needed. This illustrates the bias that exists with illnesses associated with women.

Tasca, Cecilia, et al. “Women and Hysteria in The History of Mental Health.” *Clinical Practice & Epidemiology in Mental Health*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2012, pp. 110-119. *BioMed Central Open Access Free*, doi: 10.2174/1745017901208010110.

This is a thought-provoking scientific look at the history of women being diagnosed with mental disorders (specifically nervous diseases like Hysteria) correlated to where in the world and at what historical time these diagnoses occurred. Tasca aims to inform the audience that perhaps the role of women in these different global locations contributes to firstly the opportunity to be diagnosed by a sexist male physician, as well as whether their emotions would be seen as varying from the norm. She further explains this by saying, “We have seen that both the symptomatic expression of women’s malaise and the culturally specific interpretation of the same malaise witness the changing role of women. From incomprehensible Being (and therefore mean of the Evil) to frail creatures

that try, however, to manipulate the environment to their own ends (in Freud's view) to creature arbiter of his fate (in the modern transformation from hysteria to melancholia), where the woman seems to have traded power with the loneliness and guilt." This article has given me a new look at why and how these misdiagnoses are so common and continuing. It is helpful due to its extensive studies in multiple parts of the world, as well as Tasca's analysis of the effect that the evolution of the role of women has on stereotypes.

Teacher Takeaways

"This annotated bibliography shows that the student is thinking critically about their sources, but also approaching them with an open mind to avoid confirmation bias. Judging by the citations, this student has made good use of their library's database subscriptions. They have also indicated how they intend to use certain sources in the essay they will write. If anything, I might say that these annotations are a bit too long: the density of each (especially in terms of summary) would make it difficult to use as a research tool."

– Professor Wilhjelm

II. Model Research Papers

Planting the Seed: Norway's Strong Investment in Parental Leave[116]

Few experiences, if any, can match the power of becoming a parent, both in terms of sheer magnitude and pure happiness. Many parents consider the birth of their children their lives' single greatest moments—the heart and purpose of human existence. From the instant a tiny, brand-new life is handed off to eager parents, overcome with awe and amazement at the sight of what they created together, friends, family and even strangers come forward bursting with excitement to pour out their deepest affection to the new arrival. To the world, a birth inspires hope and radiates joy, even for those who never have children of their own. But with it also come some intense fears. From worries over the ever-soaring prices of daycare to concerns about simply finding the time to properly raise a child amid work and other life obligations, welcoming a new baby gets frightening quickly. Time off from work to focus fully on the many challenges of baby-rearing can drastically ease the burden for moms and dads. New parents all across the world know this, but few actually experience it as strongly as those in Norway.

From low crime rates to accessible health care to high-quality education, all piled on top of immediately obvious breathtaking scenery, countless perks make it clear why Norway was ranked the happiest country in the world for 2017 (Hetter)—not the least of which is the country's generosity toward new parents. Norway offers one of the best parental leave policies in the world, granting parents a liberal sum of both shared and individual paid leave so they can stop and concentrate on parenthood during their newborns' critical early months, and fostering gender equality by allowing paid leave time for fathers. Meanwhile, many other countries, like the U.S., the world's only industrialized nation to guarantee no paid parental leave whatsoever, place a lesser focus on time off for parents, seemingly without respect for the myriad struggles new families face. This could be to the disadvantage of not only moms and dads but also the economy at large, given the many benefits of parental leave— reduced infant mortality, better care for babies, reduced likelihood of mental illness for mothers and savings for businesses—most of which carry into the long-term (Wallace). Considering even a few advantages of parental leave, it's easy to wonder why more countries don't make leave for parents a top priority, especially when countries like Norway are realizing its positive impacts.

While Norway (along with a small handful of other countries) currently leads the way when it comes to parental leave following a birth, the country once offered leave for working mothers that more so resembled what the U.S. offers today—which isn't much. Before the introduction of new leave reform in 1977, Norway only gave mothers 12 weeks off after the birth of a child, and with no pay; today, however, mothers get about a full year of paid leave and an additional year of job protection (Carneiro). So what does that mean for the busy, modern-day working mother? For Else Marie Hasle, a 32- year-old marketing professional living in Oslo, Norway's capital city, it meant 11 months at home with her infant daughter while collecting 80 percent of her salary (Grose). In an August 2014 interview with Slate Magazine, Hasle explained that she spent the three weeks at home before the birth of her daughter, Natalia, at home and remained home with Natalia until she was 10 months old (Grose). Mothers like Hasle also have the option of a shorter leave period with 100 percent of their pay. The choice of shorter leave with more pay, or vice versa, is up to the mother.

The permission for parents to choose their own terms makes Norway's parental leave not only generous but also flexible. Right now, according to the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, or NAV for short, Norway offers parents 49 weeks at full salary or 59 weeks at 80 percent pay—one of the longest parental leave allowances in the world. This time includes three weeks of

leave for the mother prior to the baby's due date and 10 weeks each for the mother and the father—called "maternal quotas" and "paternal quotas," respectively—as well as 26 or 36 weeks, depending on the terms the couple chooses (salary in full or at 80 percent), which may be distributed among the parents as they see fit ("Parental Benefit"). Parents who adopt a child younger than 15 years of age may also draw benefits. These numbers are only matched by a handful of other countries, which includes Sweden, Denmark and Finland.

The reality for American mothers paints a bleak contrast to the situation in northern Europe. In the U.S., which stands alone as the only developed country in the world to guarantee no paid leave to either parent following a birth, expectant mothers apply for time off through the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993, which allows up to 12 360 weeks of job-protected and employee benefits-protected leave ("FMLA"). Unfortunately, mothers must spend this time taking a pay cut. Meanwhile, most of the rest of the world mandates some form of paid parental leave. Many countries also provide paid leave for fathers. Nearly half of 167 countries whose leave policies were examined in 2013 by the International Labor Organization offer paternity leave (Lord). The sad state of leave for new parents in the U.S. has remained a top issue of concern among politicians in recent years, oftentimes catching the common counter-argument that it simply costs businesses and the economy too much money. But while this is an important point, parental leave appears to be worth it in the long run.

A new mother leaving her place of work to dedicate time caring for a newborn continues to hold a position within the organization and to draw benefits, and, in countries that mandate paid maternity leave, to also receive a paycheck—all for no work. Considering the same circumstance for fathers as well spells double trouble for both productivity and revenue for businesses. Consider Christa Clapp, an American climate change economist living and working in Oslo with her husband, who took about a full year away from her job in 2016 to care for her son. But Clapp, writing for the "On Parenting" section of the Washington Post, argues that paid parental leave is actually a smart move for a country's economy. The economic value of more mothers staying in the workforce full time, she claims, offsets the costs of the parental leave that makes it possible and results in an altogether more productive society (Clapp). Companies also save money on training and turnover costs because mothers are more likely to stay with the same employer after their leave (Wallace). What's more, fathers taking their own paid leave creates a culture in which dads are more present in their children's lives, and a more gender-equal and balanced workforce—a reality that fades in the U.S., where women often transition from employee to stay-at-home mom because it makes more economical sense for the family.

The benefits of parental leave appear to be strongest for mothers, like Clapp, and their children. In the immediate, obvious sense, the mother is home with the baby and free to devote her time to caring for and bonding with her child. But the benefits run deeper and last longer than what one can see at face value. A 2011 study of the leave policies in 141 different countries found that paid parental leave can actually reduce Part Three: Research and Argumentation 361 infant mortality by as much as 10 percent; another study found that paid leave also increases the odds that babies will be seen regularly by a health care professional and receive vaccinations on time (Wallace). Paid parental leave also makes breastfeeding, the healthiest meal option for babies, more successful, with women who take leave generally breastfeeding about twice as long as those who don't (Ibid.). Mothers who take paid parental leave also face a smaller likelihood of mental health challenges, such as depression, even as many as 30 years later in life (Ibid.). This means that not only is mom in better condition when caring for her infant under the protection of paid leave, but the relationship between mother and baby is also healthier. And these benefits are lasting.

Children continue to reap the benefits of paid parental leave even into their adult years. A team of researchers examined the long-term impacts of maternity leave in Norway since the country's introduction of paid, job-protected leave time for mothers on July 1, 1977. The team compared the outcomes of children born both before and after July 1, 1977, when new reform began guaranteeing paid leave to mothers, and found that "reform had strong effects on children's subsequent high school dropout rates and earnings at age 30, especially for those whose mothers had less than 10 years of education" (Carneiro). Thus, increased time at home with children—especially time during which mothers can relax without fear of sacrificing their income—can lead to success in the child's life. These findings, taken with the numerous benefits to mothers, demonstrate that parental leave isn't necessarily a financial liability for businesses, who end up paying employees for no work; rather, it's a wise investment not only in the short-term future of the worker but also in the long-term future of the country's broader economy. But while these benefits focus on mothers and children, as does much of the research on parental leave, paid time off for fathers following a birth has its perks as well.

One of the unique features of parental leave in countries like Norway is that it also allows fathers to break away from work for time with their new children. Fathers in Norway enjoy 10 weeks of paid parental leave—referred to as a "paternal quota"—and they

may also take additional time that comes from a leave bank they share with their partners, depending on their agreement with their spouses (“Parental Benefit”). To some, this may seem counterintuitive. For thousands of years, much of the world has believed that mothers exclusively—or at least mostly—handle newborn and infant care. Perhaps this is because, in the animal kingdom, it often makes the most sense, from the standpoint of survival. It once made sense for humans as well. But the human race of today is different, with fathers involving themselves more and more in their children’s lives from an early age—and to the benefit of both child and mother.

Currently, in many households, both parents work full-time. And despite a common theme throughout history of male superiority in the workplace—at least when it comes to salary—in 40 percent of families with children, the mother is the sole or primary provider of income (Livingston). This means that, more than ever, fathers are taking on childcare responsibilities. Aside from simply freeing dads up to shoulder the work of child-rearing equally with their spouses, leave for fathers results in stronger, lasting father-child bonds. Dads who take at least 10 days of parental leave are more likely than those who don’t take any leave at all to stay actively involved with child care; in Iceland, 70 percent of men who take parental leave are sharing care with their partners as far out as three years later (Wallace). Active fathers are a norm in Norwegian culture today, most likely because of parental leave.

Keeping dads active in child care, and in turn active in the child’s life altogether, is good for the whole family. Research has shown that a strong connection between father and child promotes social and emotional development, such as learning to regulate feelings and behaviors, and also results in better educational outcomes for the child (Oliker). Greater involvement of fathers also fosters gender equality in both the household and the workplace. Through shared and individual leave quotas, a father can help his spouse tackle childcare more like an equal; in doing so, he helps free his partner up to return to work and stay at work, evening the playing in the professional environment.

In the U.S., gender roles still largely represent traditional, more dated values and beliefs. Men are guaranteed no parental leave, paid or otherwise, and are therefore often less active and available in their children’s early months and years than their Norweigan counterparts. Gender inequity is accentuated and even mocked in the U.S. This inequality could be the result of no paid parental leave policy for Americans, and it could also be what’s holding such a policy back.

At any rate, it’s a central, relevant problem, along with a host of other factors, like extreme individualism, which keeps Americans working 60- to 70-hour weeks just to climb the professional ladder. Thus, for Americans, the birth of a new baby is often scary and intimidating when it should be tender, happy and exciting. With paid leave for new parents, the event could hold the special joy it’s naturally meant to. The introduction of paid parental leave would likely mean a challenge to ingrained patriarchal ideologies, although ultimately for the hope of a better society. Change is seldom easy, but it’s necessary for progress.

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Teacher Takeaways

“The data presented here is well-integrated, and often supported by individual instances, which help to personalize what would otherwise seem like lifeless statistics and percentages. Sentences flow smoothly and main points are clear. However, the essay could use some reorganization and better transitions between sections. Overall, though, the argument benefits from a delayed thesis (a typical result of inquiry-based research); instead of outlining an argumentative stance in full at the beginning of the essay, the author waits until a thorough comparison is made between Norway and the United States, then allows for a natural progression to a final, persuasive conclusion.”

– Professor Fiscaletti

Pirates and Anarchy: Social Banditry Toward a Moral Economy[117]

The power to prosper: is this not every human’s inalienable right? What happens when social, political, and economic systems conspire to limit the power of citizens to gain a fair share of resources? It may be that a government has sanctioned monopolistic practices to large corporate interests. It may be that racism or classism has damaged the ability of certain groups to exercise equal rights to education and employment. Perhaps the government structure has collapsed all together. The case could be that government actors have exchanged the well-being of citizens for ideological power and financial gain. Time and again, these types of inequitable scenarios have supplied the basis for otherwise average people to rise up and seize control of their own destinies. They disown the system. For freedom, for self-sufficiency, for a fair livelihood, they turn to anarchy. They turn pirate.

Pirates can be characterized as rebels rejecting societal structures that disenfranchise those with less access to resources. There is a common element of anarchy as a guiding philosophy of piracy. It is scaffolding on which to attempt to define why pirates do what they do. Viewing current political events through this lens, there seem to be more and more examples recently of small acts of piracy perpetrated by citizenry. This has taken the form of message hijacking at otherwise peaceful protests, rebellious attitudes and actions toward established government structure, cyber-attacks, and far-left-wing demonstrations and violence. Examining various piratical groups over time may help shed light on what current rebellious acts by citizens may portend.

To that end, let us begin by pinning down what exactly constitutes a pirate. The swashbuckling high-seas crews depicted in movies capture one incarnation. Rather, they display one romantic idea of what pirates might have been. Stripped of those trappings though, pirates can be defined in much simpler terms. Dawdy and Bonni define piracy as: “a form of morally ambiguous property seizure committed by an organized group which can include thievery, hijacking, smuggling, counterfeiting, or kidnapping” (675). These criminal acts have to do with forceful fair distribution of resources. When small powerful segments of society such as corporations, the wealthy, and the well-connected hoard these resources, pirate groups form to break down the walls of the stockpiles to re-establish level ground (Snelders 3).

Put another way, pirate cultures arise when the benefits of obtaining resources outside the rule of law outweigh the risk of violating the laws themselves (Samatar et al. 1378). When resources are unfairly distributed across society, citizens lose faith in the system of government. They see it as their right to take action outside the law because the government in charge of that law has shirked their responsibilities to provide security and a moral economy (Ibid. 1388). When the scope of the world narrows to eating or

starving, when there is no one coming to save the day, when there is no other way out, when all that is left is survival, those are the moments that pirates are born. Citizens' determination to be masters of their own destiny results from the lack of fair central societal structure. They choose desperate measures ("I Am Not").

Piratical groups across time have other commonalities. They tend to be cohesive assemblies of displaced people. They have binding social agreements among members, such as work ethic and equal distribution of takings (Dawdy and Bonni 680- 681). There tends to be an anti-capitalist agenda in the prizes sought as a bid for economic freedom. While locally sanctioned by average citizens, pirates act counter to the rule of law, especially when economic opportunity within societal norms becomes scarce (Dawdy and Bonni 677). Pirates act in defiance of government.

In fact, parallels can be drawn between piratical groups and the philosophy of anarchy. Indeed, as noted above, pirates emerge out of the void left when hierarchical governments either collapse or abandon their responsibilities to citizens. Anarchy is the antithesis of centralized government. It is governance by social networks (Wachhaus 33).

The *English Oxford Living Dictionary* defines anarchy as "A state of disorder due to absence or non-recognition of authority or other controlling systems" (Anarchy). However, Hirshleifer provides a more robust explanation by stating "anarchy is a social arrangement in which contenders struggle to conquer and defend durable resources, without effective regulation by either higher authorities or social pressures" (27). The lack of an overarching power structure is the main idea in both definitions, but in the latter, the motivations and activities of such groups are considered.

In a system of anarchy, groups must act collectively to seize and defend resources. Dissolution of ties between members is always a threat dependent on the individual profits of fighting for and defending resources (Hirshleifer 48). Cohesion then is contingent on mutual success.

There is a shift of mind necessary to turn from hierarchical structures of management to one that is a linkage of groups acting communally. Without decisive leaders in the power structure, social contracts can be difficult to construct and manage (Hirshleifer 48). The fluid nature then of anarchic group organization leaves them fragile. Group members must agree on goals and methods in order to achieve stability. Part Three: Research and Argumentation 367 Agreement on a social contract is challenging as is remaining cohesive and resisting merging with other groups with different social contracts (Hirshleifer 48). Fairness in distribution of holdings and contribution of actors in these groups is essential (Wachhaus 33-34). The constraints on authority within anarchic structures and the social agreements necessary for actionable goal achievement, mean that these groups are small and locally oriented. They must focus on the here and now of meeting the needs of members.

The anarchic element of agreement on structure makes sense in terms of piratical organizations as well. Captains are captains at the pleasure of the crew so long as his/her decision-making enables the group as a whole to prosper. His/her skills are useful only if plunder is acquired regularly and allotted equally. Crews are successful so long as they maximize skill sets and cooperate to compete with other groups to seize resources and to defend them. Therein lies their strength. A resistance of submission to anything but self-rule is, of course, paramount. To illustrate this, let us now explore some cases of pirates over time.

Piracy has been in existence throughout the ages and has taken on many forms. It is beyond the scope of this paper to cover the detailed history from its inception to current times. However, a few examples will be described that help to showcase the idea of societal inequalities leading to anarchy and piracy.

One of these incarnations was the seafaring sort terrorizing ships during the Golden Age of Piracy. This was during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, reaching an extreme height of activity from 1690 to 1730 (Skowronek and Ewen 2). This exacerbation began after a combination of economic factors. First, the British Royal Navy released thousands of sailors by 1715 following the end of the War of the Spanish Succession (Snelders 168). Employment competition for these skilled seamen was fierce. Available posts were minimal and working conditions poor. This left many to turn to a life of piracy as a way to find occupation and freedom from oppressive maritime companies. Also, government sanctioned monopolization of trade mercantile companies caused damage to local economies. Smaller operations were not allowed to compete. The glut of unemployed sailors gave rise to piracy as economic protest (Dawdy and Bonni 681-682; Snelders 168). In fact, piracy in the early 1700s worked to throw trade into turmoil (Dawdy and Bonni 681). They robbed ships specifically to clip the metaphorical purse strings of enterprises such as the East India Company, which held a monopoly on maritime trade. Pirates during this time believed that their practices, violent though they were, were justified. It was their right to find their fortune outside the societal structure that would have them live in poverty.

Piracy was therefore a bid for freedom (Wilson xi). They were "organizations of social bandits," rebelling against capitalistic injustices (Dawdy and Bonni 675). The intentional anarchic nature of the acts committed were a response to being left behind economically by political structures. They were fleeting and yes, floating communities involved in this social banditry intent on "Redistribution of economic wealth that would otherwise flow to merchant capitalists and state bureaucracies" (Snelders 3). They acted to balance the scales, though it should be said that those with even less access to resources also suffered at the hands of the pirates. Though this paper will not be going into specific details of exploits, it should be acknowledged that not all groups during the Golden Age of Piracy acted for the good of the moral economy.

Each of these pirate operations had its own micro-culture. To say they were all the same would be reductive. However, there was a generalizable pirate code during this time. Many of the elements of anarchy discussed above apply to the structure of these brotherhoods. Pirates created their own societies with their own agreed upon rules (Snelders 3). Pirate cultures demanded "mutual discussion, agreement upon goals, strategy, and tactics, and a fair distribution of the plunder" (Ibid. 162). Fraternal bonds were powerful. Without country or refuge, they had only their brotherhood by which to bind themselves (Ibid. 198). Home was a ship. Family was their crew. All the world their country. Pirate life was short and violent. They spent their shared plunder and celebrated often as if it were their last day on earth (Ibid. 198). The fact was that that might just be the case.

The pirate industry of the Golden Age of Piracy could not last. They had flouted their lawlessness and power too much. They had inflicted massive damage on the fortunes of the East India Company. Governments resolved to hunt down pirate operations (Skowronek and Ewen 2). Some slipped away to anonymity, but the majority were captured and hung as criminals. The Golden Age thus faded to legend. However, this was not the end of piracy.

An example of piracy in more modern times was the Somali pirates that preyed on ships skirting the Eastern African coast from 2008 to 2013. Many elements came together for this to take place. The crumbling state, a non-functioning government, clan rule, and tribal warfare all were contributors. Samatar et al. outline the following conditions that lead to modern piracy:

1) the existence of a favourable topographic environment; 2) the prevalence of ungoverned spaces—either as the result of legal dispute between states or simply because of their absence; 3) the existence of weak law enforcement or weak political will of governments or a cultural environment that is not hostile to piracy; and 4) the availability of great rewards for piracy while the risks are minimal. (1378)

All of these elements came together in Somalia to propagate piracy as a normalized practice. The downfall of the Somali government was the final catalyst for the emergence of piracy in the region (Samatar et al. 1384). State institutions became nonfunctioning, leaving instability in its wake (Otto 46). Without the structure of a central government, citizens were left to fend for themselves.

Piracy originated as ordinary Somali fishermen defending against foreign interests illegally looting fish from the coastline, depriving them of a valuable resource during desperate times (Otto 46; Samatar et al. 1387). There was no government force to prevent fish from being poached by adversarial enterprises seeking to capitalize on undefended waters. It fell to Somali citizens to maintain security. What became evident was that there was a larger prize than fish as an economic resource. Protecting the waters became fining or taxing for territory invasion. This in turn became kidnapping and ransoming ("I Am Not"; Otto 46). According to Otto, "a single ransom can generate up to US $10 million" (47). In 2010 alone, 1000 people were taken hostage ("I Am Not"). In the vacuum that was Somalia's economy at the time, ransom piracy became the main industry in the region. Without a centralized government, clans ran the country in a network of warring tribes (Ibid.). Warlords and other clan members helped in the recruitment and coordination of pirate groups (Otto 47). Locals could invest in piracy and expect returns. The pirates grew well-funded and well-armed ("I Am Not").

Eradication of piracy was a long and complicated process. A slow to strengthen central government reformed and began working with clans to end the ransom industry through a three step plan. A condensed look at this goes like this: religious pirate shaming, creation of alternative economic incentives, and rehabilitation of pirates ("I Am Not"). They were, after all, at a basic level, fishermen in need of employment. These were the efforts on land. This combined with seaward endeavors by foreign navies, increased security on shipping industry vessels, along with the practice of sailing farther from the coast allowed for the elimination of the pirate activity (Ibid.). By 2013, the industry of piracy in Somalia was ended.

Somalia remains economically fragile. Clans still maintain a level of power. A reemergence of rogue efforts to acquire resources doesn't seem far-fetched. Piracy arises in this area of the world when global economic cycles leave the poor without proper access

to economic participation (Samatar et al. 1379). It is a tried-and-true means of survival. Between piracy and community death by starvation, there is little choice. Now we will turn to a final and current piratical case.

This last example to be discussed is not a group of actors labeled as pirates. Rather they take action in a piratical manner. Self-identified anarchists, they are morally murky groups that utilize the practice of appropriating by force the protest demonstrations organized by other groups. This is done for the purpose of showcasing the anarchist agenda to which they subscribe (Farley). They seek to disrupt what they deem as society's oppressive structure, particularly in terms of racism and fascism ("About Rose City"). These groups have become more active in defiance of the current political milieu in the United States.

At the Portland May Day Rally on May 2nd, 2016, what began as a peaceful and legally permitted rally for workers' rights became a violent protest when it was taken over by an anarchist group (Chappell). Covered head to toe in black clothing complete with masked faces, the well-coordinated members of Rose City Antifa emerged from the crowd to sow chaos. The group vandalized property, set fires, and hurled objects at police.

Individual identities of members of anarchist groups are opaque. However, it is possible to find information on the belief system via their online presence. Rose City Antifa's website outlines some core beliefs regarding what they describe as the oppressive nature of society's structure. They see themselves in direct conflict with fascism. This is defined on their website as "an ultra-nationalist ideology that mobilizes around and glorifies a national identity defined in exclusive racial, cultural, and/or historical terms, valuing this identity above all other interests (ie: gender or class)" (About Rose City). The group points specifically to extreme right wing political organizations, so-called neo-nazis, as the antithesis of what Antifa stands for. Along with this is the acknowledgment of the frustration of "young, white, working-class men" in relation to economic opportunity. Antifa as a group intends to give these men a meaningful culture to join that doesn't include racism in the tenets, but seeks freedom and equality for all. Action is held in higher regard than rhetoric. Thus the violent and destructive measures intended to send a strong and highly visible message.

Since the US election of 2016, citizens have become more politically engaged. Protests are once again growing normalized as the public seeks to have their political positions recognized by government representatives. Another anarchist group known as the Black Bloc create spectacle at a growing number of protests using militant tactics, especially property damage. They see political protests becoming more violent as a call out and call to arms to liberal citizens whom they feel are not taking right-wing activists with enough seriousness. The Black Bloc steadfastly believes in the righteousness of these tactics against fascism in the US, despite the illegality of such actions. They feel that they need to meet far right aggression with equal force in order to protect equal rights. Like other successful pirate operations, these anarchist groups have the will and the organization to take extreme measures (Farley).

The viewpoint is that this is standing up for the disenfranchised in a country where the centralized government has abdicated their duties. Freedom and facts being flouted by the current administration is stirring anarchist anger. The Black Bloc see themselves as rebelling against a system that is sanctioning a corrupt government (Farley).

Throughout this exploration of the above pirate groups, there is the thread of demanding a moral economy. One that provides an equal measure of opportunity and access to resources for all citizens in a nation. Samatar et al. explains it in this way:

The essence of the moral economy argument is that peasants and the poor in general have a set of expectations that govern their sense of justice. When such values are violated they respond vigorously to protect their livelihood and their sense of fairness. (1388)

Pirates defy the rule of law under hierarchical governments that fail to provide a moral economy. They create their own rules and cultural norms. They take action rather than sit quietly while rights are violated. Yes, there is violence. Yes, other members of society suffer losses at the hands of pirates. However, looking from a distance, it is possible to see the arc of change that occurs due to piratical movements. Golden Age pirates were able to disrupt harmful monopolized trade practices. Somali pirates forced leaders to reform a centralized government. It is yet to be seen what anarchist groups in the US such as Rose City Antifa and the Black Bloc will accomplish. One thing is certain: they are drawing attention to difficult issues. Perhaps the multiple recent bold acts of anarchist groups portend more rebellion in our society's future.

Pirates can be seen as oracles of change. Dawdy and Bonni warn that "we might look for a surge in piracy in both representation and action as an indication that a major turn of the wheel is about to occur" (696). These anthropological ideas reflect the simmering political currents we are experiencing now in 2017. The call for jobs and fair compensation are getting louder and

louder. Political polarization continues to freeze up the government, rendering them ineffectual. Worse, elected officials appear more concerned with ideology and campaign funding than the plight of the common man. They leave their own constituents' needs abandoned. Citizens may turn to extreme political philosophies such as anarchy as a way to take piratical action to counteract economic disparity. A pervasive sense of powerlessness and underrepresentation may lead to the splintering of societal structure, even rebellion. Shrugging off accountability to the system as a countermeasure to what is seen as government's inability to provide a free and fair system. This may be seen as empowering to the public. It may also signal a breakdown of centralized government. If political structures cannot provide economic stability, will citizens ultimately decide to tear it all down?

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Teacher Takeaways

"The student makes great use of a variety of sources to provide complex and numerous perspectives on the issue, using both academic and non-academic sources, which allows us to see the topic from both historical and contemporary viewpoints. The student also synthesizes the information from these sources with their own ideas very well by paraphrasing and summarizing. Some of the shorter paragraphs seem as though they continue the ideas and thoughts of those around them and could likely be merged rather than allowed to stand on their own. It is also a little unclear what the student is arguing for. Is this an examination of piracy through history and in contemporary times? Or is it an argument that piracy is a symptom of failed governments that eventually benefit the oppressed? While the introduction and conclusion are engaging, captivating, and pose great questions, the student should revise with an eye toward giving a clear statement of what they are truly arguing for, or how their research throughout the body of the essay speaks to that argument."

– Professor Dannemiller

The Hysterical Woman[118]

Hysteria was a medical recognition dating back to 1900 BC, diagnosed by physicians liberally until recent times. The term Hysteria comes from the Greek word "Hystera," which literally translates into "uterus." The diagnosis and treatment of Hysteria were routine for hundreds of years in Western Europe and the United States, mainly for keeping women in line. Symptoms that indicated

Hysteria were broad and all encompassing: nervousness, sexual desire, faintness, insomnia, irritability, loss of appetite, depression, heaviness in abdomen, etc. The number of diagnosed cases of Hysteria slowed as medical advancements proceeded, and in the early 1960's (coinciding with the popularization of feminism) the "disease" ceased to be considered a true medical disorder. In modern medicine, the treatment and diagnosis of female medical issues continues to be vague and potentially harmful due to lack of knowledge. Does the concept of female Hysteria have continuity today? Although the vocabulary has changed, it is clear that the practice of ignoring serious medical ailments based on sex remains prominent in the world of medicine, and contributes to the continuation of harmful gender stereotypes.

The beginnings of Hysteria can be followed back to ancient Egypt, around 1900 BC, when a "misplaced womb" was commonly thought to be the cause of the disease. Plato later expanded on this concept around 500 BC with his explanation of the womb as a living creature that sought to disrupt biological processes, impede breathing, limit emotional regulation, and cause disease (Adair). While Plato agreed with the prevailing theories of the time in regard to the effect of Hysteria, his ideas differed slightly on the cause. It was taken as fact that Hysteria was due to a hormonal imbalance within the female body, causing those afflicted to act out irrationally, or fall into a fit of anger. Plato, however, introduced the idea that Hysteria was due to a "moving psychological force, which arises from the womb: sexual desire perverted by frustration" (Adair). It is important to note that his theory, more insightful than anything that had been proposed before, would be opposed by physicians and commentators for nearly two thousand years following. A more sophisticated and medically forward concept of a psychiatric rather than physical affliction would not be seen for years to come.

The time and place that Hysteria saw its highest peak in relevance was around 1800-1900 in Western countries. Where Hysteria was previously diagnosed to females who "acted out" or showed signs of irritability, the diagnoses were given out for less specific symptoms in the 1800s. The women who attempted to deviate from the domestic standards of their gender, those who were depressed, and those who were irritable were now also labeled as "hysterical" (Culp-Ressler). Perhaps not so coincidentally was the simultaneous increase in frequency of Hysteria diagnoses and rise in popularity of Freudian psychoanalysis (Scull). This is necessary to consider because Freud himself placed a great deal of importance on gender roles and normative societal behavior of the sexes. It should then come as no surprise that both the stigma for being diagnosed with Hysteria, as well as the treatments and "cures" for the disease, were sexist during this time.

Women labeled "hysterical" in the 1800s and 1900s were placed in insane asylums, given the Rest Cure, and in some extreme cases given hysterectomies (CulpRessler). The main goal of the Rest Cure treatment was to confine women in rooms that were not distracting, over-feed them with the goal of weight gain, and allow them no visitors in order to limit their "stressors" and revive them back to their normal Part Three: Research and Argumentation 376 temperaments. An article published within the American Journal of Nursing in 1936 describes the daily life of a Rest Cure patient: "I'm having a rest cure and I can't see anybody ... and all I have to do is eat and sleep and not worry about anything. Just rest ... and that's just what I'm doing. I may not look it but that's just what I'm doing" ("The Rest Cure" 451). The article is just one of many accounts, fictional and otherwise, that provide a look into how women that were labeled "hysterical" were treated. It was believed that if women were able to limit their stressful tasks that they would be likely to remain delicate, proper, and feminine—desirable traits in a Victorian wife and mother. John Harvey Kellogg's book titled *Ladies' Guide in Health and Disease: Girlhood, Maidenhood, Wifehood, Motherhood* was a common source on explaining to women the necessary steps they ought to take in order to lead healthy, childbearing lives. On the topic of Hysteria, Kellogg notes that the common causes are "sexual excess, novel reading, perverted habits of thought, and idleness" (586). As Kellogg mentions that the disease is one of "morality", he further shames women into lives free of hard work and free thinking. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, author of "The Yellow Wallpaper" (a fictional tell-all of her experience with the Rest Cure), once wrote a letter detailing the lifestyle she was told to lead in order to keep her unruly nerves at bay. She was given advice to "live as domestic a life as far as possible", to "have but two hours' intellectual life a day", and "never touch pen, brush, or pencil again" as long as she lived (Gilman). As gender norms went unquestioned in the Victorian era, as did the sexism visible in the medical world.

Due to Hysteria's feminine association, it was further deemed shameful and embarrassing. This stereotype was promoted after the Second World War, when many soldiers returning home from battle were diagnosed with nervous diseases, most specifically Hysteria (Scull). Due to nervous diseases being seen as feminine afflictions of the imagination, these men received little to no treatment—similar to females diagnosed with Hysteria. These men were seen as cowardly and inferior for a malady that today would be easily recognizable as post-traumatic stress disorder. While the patients were male, they were seen as contracting a

feminine disease that was “made up in the mind” (Scull), therefore hindering the help that they needed. The lack of attention shown to these soldiers reinforces the idea of a bias that exists with illnesses that are associated with women.

During the 1960s and 1970s, feminist writers were quick to isolate Hysteria’s literal definition in order to successfully convey criticisms of Freud’s psychoanalytic treatments of the “disease” (“Brought”). Women of this age began to critique the healthcare system, and were able to expose the effect of sexism in medicine. Because of fervent denunciations, the term slowly fell out of medical use but remained a common phrase in day-to-day conversations. Hysteria was officially removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1980 (Culp-Ressler), and is now considered a derogatory term. Many physicians and psychologists attempted to continue the diagnosis of the disease, but under new, more socially acceptable terms. Freud himself claimed to change focus to one’s “sexual conflicts” within (Scull), and the effects. He then created a way of disguising old ideas of Hysteria behind fresh words. This trend carries on today despite opportunities to change the culture.

One of the more surprising turns in the history of Hysteria as a concept, is the reclamation of the word by 1990s feminists. In striking contrast to the views held by progressive women of the ‘60s, ‘70s, and ‘80s, some ‘90s women sought to recover and take ownership of the inherently feminine rights of Hysteria. Elaine Showalter, an author of the 90s on the topics of Hysteria, gender, and feminism, claims that “for some writers, Hysteria has been claimed as the first step on the road to feminism, a specifically feminine pathology that speaks to and against the patriarchy” (286). Interestingly, prior to this time, Hysteria was dubbed a tool of the patriarchy and that notion held true amongst feminists. This insight from Showalter addresses the lengths that sexism can reach. Internalization of patriarchal views on sex is a common effect, especially with views that are enforced blindly without question. The concept of an irrational woman, or a woman possessed by emotion rang true for some women of the ‘90s, but they saw this falsehood as something to be proud of, and something to aspire to. In their attempts to argue the reclamation of Hysteria, they succumb to the long-enforced stereotypes that many fought to destroy. While emotion, passion, and vulnerability aren’t necessarily traits to be ashamed of, they were used through the trustful relationship of physicians as a tool to suppress the social, economic, and personal growth of women through the diagnoses of nervous diseases.

Stereotypes of the feminine gender have made their way into modern medicine as well. As women are socialized from birth to be passive and to respect authority, more specifically male authority, it is uncommon for a woman to resist the diagnosis received from a physician. Typically, if a woman is told that she is a hypochondriac, or that her symptoms are psychosomatic (all in her head), she will most likely internalize the notion that she is imagining all of her issues. The term “psychosomatic” is a cover-all diagnosis commonly used by physicians to attribute to any symptoms that cannot be explained. As a result, many women continue suffering through treatable and preventable diseases because they are fearful of being told that they are overreacting (Culp-Ressler). This demonstrates that even within ourselves, women fear falling into the feminine gender stereotypes of irrational and excessive behavior—internalized misogyny presents itself here.

From this, we must ask why do we, as individuals and as a society, not trust women to know their own bodies? We see this in cases ranging from the extreme to the everyday—from the treatment of rape survivors to a typical visit to the doctor’s office. Aside from flaws in women’s reproductive health care, there is also a well-documented gap in the treatment of pain between men and women. Of the 25% of Americans suffering from chronic pain, women make up a disproportionate majority (Edwards). Not only are women more likely to suffer from chronic pain, but that pain is more likely to be categorized as “emotional,” “psychogenic,” or “not real”. Women are also less likely than men to receive aggressive treatment after being diagnosed with autoimmune diseases that cause chronic pain (Edwards). Multiple studies have found that women are far less likely to receive any kind of medical intervention to manage pain (Culp-Ressler). Why? Pain is self-reported and subjective, and treatment of pain fully relies on the idea that a physician trusts the patient reporting symptoms. However, trusting a woman to be a reliable source on her own body is still not the norm. This practice contributes to the long-standing cycle of attributing women’s pain to mental disorders, thus reinforcing the stereotype of the Hysterical Woman.

While many medical professionals would agree that there needs to be a shift in how we look at both the gender and sex dynamics of healthcare, there is little being done about it. Clinical trials are just one example. Women make up roughly half of the country’s population, but an astonishing majority of participants in clinical trials within the United States are men. According to the Journal of Women’s Health, in 2004, women made up less than 25% of all patients enrolled in clinical trials for that year (Moyer). The reasoning for this is that women present a less uniform sample population: they have menstrual cycles and hormones, making results more difficult to analyze. However, this does not eradicate the need for personalized care being available to women. This bias is decades-old, and leads doctors to preferentially study diseases and test drugs in male participants. A bias this prominent is a

serious health risk for women, limits the reach of our preventative care and hinders growth of scientific knowledge. Another struggle presenting itself is the unwillingness of medical professionals to make use of what little sex-specific data has been found. For example, despite wellrecognized sex differences in coronary heart disease management in critical care units, the guidelines for management are not sex-specific (Holdcroft). Unfortunately, guidelines rarely state that evidence has been mainly obtained from men; disregarding this information perpetuates inequality in treatment of disease and distribution of medication.

The limited scope of our current knowledge on gender/sex differences can be observed in newly discovered differences in disease symptoms, as well as the continuing decrease of the life expectancy gap. Biased medical research and practice focuses on gender differences, and therefore risks overlooking similarities. For example, coronary heart disease was once perceived as strictly affecting males; therefore, less research and attention was given to the possibility of women contracting the disease (Annandale). Now, perhaps as a result, coronary heart disease kills more women than men. Women in the 1960s and 70s lived markedly longer than men, but in recent years the gap has decreased (Ibid.), and shrunken more than one third since the early 80s.The exact cause of the decline in the gender life expectancy gap cannot be pinpointed due to a number of confounding variables. The increase in women working to retirement and the added stress of contributing financially as well as taking full responsibility of children are just a few. One widely debated cause of the gap decrease is the fact that the quality of men's healthcare is surpassing that of women's. The standard of disregarding women from clinical trials creates an unhealthy environment of willful ignorance on the topic of women's healthcare due to stereotypes, and the effects are measurable.

With the sex-biased culture of medicine so ingrained into its academia and practice, the task of eradicating it seems all the more important. This becomes more true as a greater percent of the population becomes aware of gender stereotypes and the harm that they cause. Unfortunately, due to fear of being labeled a hypochondriac, or neurotic, women refrain from telling their medical experiences and demanding quality care. With a majority of women experiencing patriarchal authority during doctor visits, and many women sharing similar stories of struggling with a lack of accurate diagnosis, it's a shame that this topic isn't discussed on a broad scope. If experiences were documented, it would be a faster way to make society more aware of this specific branch of inequality and how it contributes to negative gender stereotypes.

A practical way of accomplishing this would be to implement changes into the medical school curricula. We should seize the opportunity to implement the best practices for healthcare regardless of gender identification, as well as to establish evidence-based guidance that focuses on both gender and sex differences. Informing future physicians that it is not in the best interest of the patient to quickly jump to the conclusion that their symptoms are psychosomatic, or to share stories of specific experiences would eventually trickle down into the medical culture. Informing these students that it is within the realm of possibility that these women might be presenting symptoms to an affliction that is not well understood, even by modern medicine. The exercise of attributing the valid symptoms of women to mental disorders has been commonplace for centuries—Hysteria, Conversion, etc. While the name continues to change, the meanings behind them stay the same, and women continue to be subjected to sexism, and low-quality healthcare as a result. Acknowledging the bias within is the first and most important step to moving forward and increasing the quality of women's healthcare.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Creating Presentations - Sharing Your Ideas

10.1: Organizing a Visual Presentation

10.2: Incorporating Effective Visuals into a Presentation

10.3: Giving a Presentation

10.E: Creating Presentations - Sharing Your Ideas (Exercises)

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10.1: Organizing a Visual Presentation

Learning Objectives

- Identify key ideas and details to create a concise, engaging presentation.
- Identify the steps involved in planning a comprehensive presentation.

Until now, you have interacted with your audience of readers indirectly, on the page. You have tried to anticipate their reactions and questions as all good writers do. Anticipating the audience's needs can be tough, especially when you are sitting alone in front of your computer.

When you give a presentation, you connect directly with your audience. For most people, making a presentation is both exciting and stressful. The excitement comes from engaging in a two-way interaction about your ideas. The stress comes from the pressure of presenting your ideas without having a delete button to undo mistakes. Outside the classroom, you may be asked to give a presentation, often at the last minute, and the show must go on. Presentations can be stressful, but planning and preparation, when the time and opportunity are available, can make all the difference.

This chapter covers how to plan and deliver an effective, engaging presentation. By planning carefully, applying some time-honored presentation strategies, and practicing, you can make sure that your presentation comes across as confident, knowledgeable, and interesting—and that your audience actually learns from it. The specific tasks involved in creating a presentation may vary slightly depending on your purpose and your assignment. However, these are the general steps.

Follow these steps to create a presentation based on your ideas:

1. Determine your purpose and identify the key ideas to present.
2. Organize your ideas in an outline.
3. Identify opportunities to incorporate visual or audio media, and create or locate these media aids.
4. Rehearse your presentation in advance.
5. Deliver your presentation to your audience.

Getting Started: Identifying and Organizing Key Ideas

To deliver a successful presentation, you need to develop content suitable for an effective presentation. Your ideas make up your presentation, but to deliver them effectively, you will need to identify key ideas and organize them carefully. Read the following considerations, which will help you first identify and then organize key ideas:

- **Be concise.** You will include the most important ideas and leave out others. Some concepts may need to be simplified.
- **Employ more than one medium of expression.** You should incorporate other media, such as charts, graphs, photographs, video or audio recordings, or websites.
- **Prepare for a face-to-face presentation.** If you must deliver a face-to-face presentation, it is important to project yourself as a serious and well-informed speaker. You will often speak extemporaneously, or in a rehearsed but not memorized manner, which allows for flexibility given the context or audience. You will need to know your points and keep your audience engaged.

Determine Your Purpose

As with a writing assignment, determining the purpose of your presentation early on is crucial. You want to inform your readers about the topic, but think about what else you hope to achieve.

Are you presenting information intended to move your audience to adopt certain beliefs or take action on a particular issue? If so, you are speaking not only to inform but also to persuade your listeners. Do you want your audience to come away from your presentation knowing how to do something they that they did not know before? In that case, you are not only informing them but also explaining or teaching a process.

writing at work

Schoolteachers are trained to structure lessons around one or more lesson objectives. Usually the objective, the mission or purpose, states what students should know or be able to do after they complete the lesson. For example, an objective might state, “Students will understand the specific freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment” or “Students will be able to add two three-digit numbers correctly.”

As a manager, mentor, or supervisor, you may sometimes be required to teach or train other employees as part of your job. Determining the desired outcome of a training session will help you plan effectively. Identify your teaching objectives. What, specifically, do you want your audience to know (for instance, details of a new workplace policy) or be able to do (for instance, use a new software program)? Plan your teaching or training session to meet your objectives.

Identify Key Ideas

To plan your presentation, think in terms of three or four key points you want to get across. In a paper, you have the space to develop ideas at length and delve into complex details. In a presentation, however, you must convey your ideas more concisely.

One strategy you might try is to create an outline. What is your main idea? Would your main idea work well as key points for a brief presentation? How would you condense topics that might be too lengthy, or should you eliminate topics that may be too complicated to address in your presentation?

Exercise 10.1.1

Revisit your presentation assignment, or think of a topic for your presentation. On your own sheet of notebook paper, write a list of at least three to five key ideas. Keep the following questions in mind when listing your key ideas:

- What is your purpose?
- Who is your audience?
- How will you engage your audience?

2. On the same paper, identify the steps you must complete before you begin creating your presentation.

Use an Outline to Organize Ideas

After you determine which ideas are most appropriate for your presentation, you will create an outline of those ideas. Your presentation, like a written assignment, should include an introduction, body, and conclusion. These components serve much the same purpose as they do in a written assignment.

- The introduction engages the audience’s attention, introduces the topic, and sets the tone for what is to come.
- The body develops your point of view with supporting ideas, details, and examples presented in a logical order.
- The conclusion restates your point of view, sums up your main points, and leaves your audience with something to think about.

Jorge, who wrote the research paper featured in Chapter 11, developed the following outline. Jorge relied heavily on this outline to plan his presentation, but he adjusted it to suit the new format.

Planning Your Introduction

In Chapter 12, you learned techniques for writing an interesting introduction, such as beginning with a surprising fact or statistic, a thought-provoking question or quotation, a brief anecdote that illustrates a larger concept or connects your topic to your audience's experiences. You can use these techniques effectively in presentations as well. You might also consider actively engaging your audience by having members respond to questions or complete a brief activity related to your topic. For example, you may have your audience respond to a survey or tell about an experience related to your topic.

Incorporating media can also be an effective way to get your audience's attention. Visual images such as a photograph or a cartoon can invoke an immediate emotional response. A graph or chart can highlight startling findings in research data or statistical information. Brief video or audio clips that clearly reinforce your message and do not distract or overwhelm your audience can provide a sense of immediacy when you plan to discuss an event or a current issue. A PowerPoint presentation allows you to integrate many of these different media sources into one presentation.

> **Tip**
>
> With the accessibility provided by the Internet, you can find interesting and appropriate audio and video with little difficulty. However, the clip alone will not sustain the presentation. To keep the audience interested and engaged, you must frame the beginning and end of the clip with your own words.

Jorge completed the introduction part of his outline by listing the key points he would use to open his presentation. He also planned to show various web links early on to illustrate the popularity of the low-carbohydrate diet trend.

Planning the Body of Your Presentation

The next step is to work with the key ideas you identified earlier. Determine the order in which you want to present these ideas, and flesh them out with important details. Chapter 10 discusses several organizational structures you might work with, such as chronological order, comparison-and-contrast structure, or cause-and-effect structure.

How much detail you include will depend on the time allotted for your presentation. Your instructor will most likely give you a specific time limit or a specific slide limit, such as eight to ten slides. If the time limit is very brief (two to three minutes, for instance), you will need to focus on communicating your point of view, main supporting points, and only the most relevant details. Three minutes can feel like an eternity if you are speaking before a group, but the time will pass very quickly. It is important to use it well.

If you have more time to work with—ten minutes or half an hour—you will be able to discuss your topic in greater detail. More time also means you must devote more thought into how you will hold your audience's interest. If your presentation is longer than five minutes, introduce some variety so the audience is not bored. Incorporate multimedia, invite the audience to complete an activity, or set aside time for a question-and-answer session.

Jorge was required to limit his presentation to five to seven minutes. In his outline, he made a note about where he would need to condense some complicated material to stay within his time limit. He also decided to focus only on cholesterol and heart disease in his discussion of long-term health outcomes. The research on other issues was inconclusive, so Jorge decided to omit this material. Jorge's notes on his outline show the revisions he has made to his presentation.

Tip

You are responsible for using your presentation time effectively to inform your audience. You show respect for your audience by following the expected time limit. However, that does not mean you must fill all of that time with talk if you are giving a face-to-face presentation. Involving your audience can take some of the pressure off you while also keeping them engaged. Have them respond to a few brief questions to get them thinking. Display a relevant photograph, document, or object and ask your classmates to comment. In some presentations, if time allows, you may choose to have your classmates complete an individual or group activity.

Planning Your Conclusion

The conclusion should briefly sum up your main idea and leave your audience with something to think about. As in a written paper, you are essentially revisiting your thesis. Depending on your topic, you may also ask the audience to reconsider their thinking about an issue, to take action, or to think about a related issue. If you presented an attention-getting fact or anecdote in your introduction, consider revisiting it in your conclusion. Just as you have learned about an essay's conclusion, do not add new content to the presentation's conclusion.

No matter how you choose to structure your conclusion, make sure it is well planned so that you are not tempted to wrap up your presentation too quickly. Inexperienced speakers, in a face-to-face presentation, sometimes rush through the end of a presentation to avoid exceeding the allotted time or to end the stressful experience of presenting in public. Unfortunately, a hurried conclusion makes the presentation as a whole less memorable.

Tip

Time management is the key to delivering an effective presentation whether it is face-to-face or in PowerPoint. As you develop your outline, think about the amount of time you will devote to each section. For instance, in a five-minute face-to-face presentation, you might plan to spend one minute on the introduction, three minutes on the body, and one minute on the conclusion. Later, when you rehearse, you can time yourself to determine whether you need to adjust your content or delivery.

In a PowerPoint presentation, it is important that your presentation is visually stimulating, avoids information overload by limiting the text per slide, uses speaker notes effectively, and uses a font that is visible on the background (e.g., avoid white letters on a light background or black letters on a dark background).

? Exercise 10.1.2

Work with the list you created in Exercise 1 to develop a more complete outline for your presentation. Make sure your outline includes the following:

- An introduction that uses strategies to capture your audience's attention
- A body section that summarizes your main points and supporting details
- A conclusion that will help you end on a memorable note
- Brief notes about how much time you plan to spend on each part of the presentation (you may adjust the timing later as needed)

Identifying Opportunities to Incorporate Visual and Audio Media

You may already have some ideas for how to incorporate visual and audio media in your presentation. If not, review your outline and begin thinking about where to include media. Presenting information in a variety of formats will help you keep your audience's interest.

Use Presentation Software

Delivering your presentation as a slideshow is one way to use media to your advantage. As you speak, you use a computer and an attached projector to display a slideshow of text and graphics that complement the speech. Your audience will follow your ideas more easily, because you are communicating with them through more than one sense. The audience hears your words and also sees the corresponding visuals. A listener who momentarily loses track of what you are saying can rely on the slide to cue his or her memory.

To set up your presentation, you will need to work with the content of your outline to develop individual slides. Each slide should focus on just a few bullet points (or a similar amount of content presented in a graphic). Remember that your audience must be able to read the slides easily, whether the members sit in the front or the back of the room. Avoid overcrowding the slides with too much text.

Using presentation software, such as PowerPoint, allows you to incorporate graphics, sounds, and even web links directly into your slides. You can also work with available styles, color schemes, and fonts to give your presentation a polished, consistent appearance. Different slide templates make it easy to organize information to suit your purpose. Be sure your font is visible to you audience. Avoid using small font or colored font that is not visible against your background.

Use PowerPoint as a Visual Aid

PowerPoint and similar visual representation programs can be effective tools to help audiences remember your message, but they can also be an annoying distraction to your speech. How you prepare your slides and use the tool will determine your effectiveness.

PowerPoint is a slideware program that you have no doubt seen used in class, seen in a presentation at work, or perhaps used yourself to support a presentation. PowerPoint and similar slideware programs provide templates for creating electronic slides to present visual information to the audience, reinforcing the verbal message. You will be able to import or cut and paste words from text files, images, or video clips to create slides to represent your ideas. You can even incorporate web links. When using any software program, it is always a good idea to experiment with it long before you intend to use it; explore its many options and functions, and see how it can be an effective tool for you.

At first, you might be overwhelmed by the possibilities, and you might be tempted to use all the bells, whistles, and sound effects, not to mention the tumbling, flying, and animated graphics. If used wisely, a dissolve or key transition can be like a well-executed scene from a major motion picture and lead your audience to the next point. But if used indiscriminately, it can annoy the audience to the point where they cringe in anticipation of the sound effect at the start of each slide. This danger is inherent in the tool, but you are in charge of it and can make wise choices that enhance the understanding and retention of your information.

The first point to consider is which visual aid is the most important. The answer is you, the speaker. You will facilitate the discussion, give life to the information, and help the audience correlate the content to your goal or purpose. You do not want to be in a position where the PowerPoint presentation is the focus and you are on the side of the stage simply helping the audience follow along. Slides should support you in your presentation, rather than the other way around. Just as there is a number one rule for handouts (do not pass them out at the start of your presentation), there is also one for PowerPoint presentations: do not use PowerPoint slides as a read-aloud script for your speech. The PowerPoint slides should amplify and illustrate your main points, not reproduce everything you are going to say.

Your pictures are the second area of emphasis you will want to consider. The tool will allow you to show graphs, charts and illustrate relationships that words may only approach in terms of communication, but your verbal support of the visual images will make all the difference. Dense pictures or complicated graphics will confuse more than they clarify. Choose clear images that have an immediate connection to both your content and the audience, tailored to their specific needs. After the images, consider using only key words that can be easily read to accompany your pictures. The fewer words the better. Try to keep each slide to a total word count of less than ten words. Do not use full sentences. Using key words provides support for your verbal discussion, guiding you as well as your audience. The key words can serve as signposts or signal words related to key ideas.

A natural question at this point is, How do I communicate complex information simply? The answer comes with several options. The visual representation on the screen is for support and illustration. Should you need to communicate more technical, complex, or in-depth information in a visual way, consider preparing a handout to distribute at the conclusion of your speech. You may also consider using a printout of your slide show with a section for taking notes, but if you distribute it at the beginning of your speech, you run the risk of turning your presentation into a guided reading exercise and possibly distracting or losing members of the audience. Everyone reads at a different pace and takes notes in their own way. You do not want to be in the position of going back and forth between slides to help people follow along.

Another point to consider is how you want to use the tool to support your speech and how your audience will interpret its presentation. Most audiences wouldn't want to read a page of text—as you might see in this book—on the big screen. They will be far more likely to glance at the screen and assess the information you present in relation to your discussion. Therefore, it is key to consider one main idea, relationship, or point per slide. The use of the tool should be guided with the idea that its presentation is for the audience's benefit, not yours. People often understand pictures and images more quickly and easily than text, and you can use this to your advantage, using the knowledge that a picture is worth a thousand words.

Incorporate Visual Media

Even if you do not use a slideshow to complement your presentation, you can include visual media to support and enhance your content. Visual media are divided into two major categories: images and informational graphics.

Image-based media, such as photographs or videos, often have little or no accompanying text. Often these media are more powerful than words in getting a message across. Within the past decade, the images associated with major news stories, such as the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, the Abu Ghraib prison abuses from 2004 to 2006, and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, have powerfully affected viewers' emotions and drawn their attention to these news stories.

Figure **10.1.1**

Even if your presentation addresses a less dramatic subject, you can still use images to draw in your audience. Consider how photographs, an illustration, or a video might help your audience connect with a particular person or place or bring a historical event to life. Use visual images to support descriptions of natural or man-made phenomena. What ideas lend themselves to being explained primarily through images?

In addition, consider how you might incorporate informational graphics in your presentation. Informational graphics include diagrams, tables, pie charts, bar and line graphs, and flow charts. Informational graphics usually include some text and often work well to present numerical information. Consider using them if you are presenting statistics, comparing facts or data about several different groups, describing changes over time, or presenting a process.

Incorporate Audio Media

Although audio media are not as versatile as visual media, you may wish to use them if they work well with your particular topic. If your presentation discusses trends in pop music or analyzes political speeches, playing an audio clip is an obvious and effective choice. Clips from historical speeches, radio talk shows, and interviews can also be used, but extended clips may be ineffective with modern audiences. Always assess your audience's demographics and expectations before selecting and including audio media.

? Exercise 10.1.3

Review the outline you created in Exercise 2. Complete the following steps:

1. Identify at least two to three places in your presentation where you might incorporate visual or audio media. Brainstorm ideas for what media would be effective, and create a list of ideas. (In Section 14.2, you will explore different media options in greater depth. For now, focus on coming up with a few general ideas.)
2. Determine whether you will use presentation software to deliver your presentation as a slideshow. If you plan to do so, begin using your outline to draft your slides.

Figure **10.1.2** - Source: www.agenciabrasil.gov.br/medi...P5978.jpg/view

Planning Ahead: Annotating Your Presentation

When you make a presentation, you are giving a performance of sorts. It may not be as dramatic as a play or a movie, but it requires smooth coordination of several elements—your words, your gestures, and any media you include. One way to ensure that the performance goes smoothly is to annotate your presentation ahead of time.

To annotate means to add comments or notes to a document. You can use this technique to plan how the different parts of your presentation will flow together. For instance, if you are working with slides, add notes to your outline indicating when you will show each slide. If you have other visual or audio media to include, make a note of that, too. Be as detailed as necessary. Jotting "Start video at 3:14" can spare you the awkwardness of searching for the right clip during your presentation.

writing at work

In the workplace, employees are often asked to deliver presentations or conduct a meeting using standard office presentation software. If you are using presentation software, you can annotate your presentation easily as you create your slides. Use the notes feature at the bottom of the page to add notes for each slide. As you deliver your presentation, your notes will be visible to you on the computer screen but not to your audience on the projector screen.

In a face-to-face presentation, make sure your final annotated outline is easy to read. It will serve to cue you during your presentation, so it does not need to look polished, as long as it is clear to you. Double space the text. Use a larger-than-normal font size (14 or 16 points) if that will make it easier for you to read. Boldface or italics will set off text that should be emphasized or delivered with greater emotion. Write out main points, as well as your opening and closing remarks, in complete sentences, along with any material you want to quote verbatim. Use shorter phrases for supporting details. Using your speaker notes effectively will help you deliver an effective presentation. Highlighting, all capital letters, or different-colored font will help you easily distinguish notes from the text of your speech. Read Jorge's annotated outline.

Tip

Some students prefer to write out the full text of their face-to-face presentation. This can be a useful strategy when you are practicing your delivery. However, keep in mind that reading your text aloud, word for word, will not help you capture and hold your audience's attention. Write out and read your speech if that helps you rehearse. After a few practice sessions, when you are more comfortable with your material, switch to working from an outline. That will help you sound more natural when you speak to an audience.

In a PowerPoint presentation, remember to have your slides in logical sequential order. Annotating your presentation before submitting it to your audience or your instructor will help you check for order and logical transitions. Too much text or data may confuse your audience; strive for clarity and avoid unnecessary details. Let the pictures or graphics tell the story but do not overload your slideshow with visuals. Be sure your font is visible. Look for consistency in the time limit of your presentation to gauge your level of preparedness.

Exercise 10.1.4

Begin to annotate your outline. (You will probably add more notes as you proceed, but including some annotations now will help you begin pulling your ideas together.) Mark your outline with the following information:

1. Write notes in brackets to any sections where you definitely plan to incorporate visual or audio media.
2. If you are presenting a slideshow, add notes in brackets indicating which slides go with each section of your outline.
3. Identify and set off any text that should be emphasized.

Key Takeaways

- An effective presentation presents ideas more concisely than a written document and uses media to explain ideas and hold the audience's interest.
- Like an essay, a presentation should have a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Good writers structure their presentations on the thesis, or point of view; main ideas; and key supporting details and create a presentation outline to organize their ideas.
- Annotating a presentation outline is a useful way to coordinate different parts of the presentation and manage time effectively.

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10.2: Incorporating Effective Visuals into a Presentation

Learning Objectives

- Recognize the characteristics of effective visual aids.
- Analyze different types of visual aids and appropriate ways to use them.
- Determine how to create original visual aids and how to locate visual aids created by others.

Good communication is a multisensory experience. Children first learning how to read often gravitate toward books with engaging pictures. As adults, we graduate to denser books without pictures, yet we still visualize ideas to help us understand the text. Advertisers favor visual media—television, magazines, and billboards—because they are the best way to hook an audience. Websites rely on color, graphics, icons, and a clear system of visual organization to engage Internet surfers.

Bringing visuals into a presentation adds color, literally and figuratively. There is an art to doing it well. This section covers how to use different kinds of visual aids effectively.

Using Visual Aids: The Basics

Good writers make conscious choices. They understand their purpose and audience. Every decision they make on the page, from organizing an essay to choosing a word with just the right connotations, is made with their purpose and audience in mind.

The same principle applies to visual communication. As a presenter, you choose the following:

- When to show images or video for maximum impact
- Which images will best produce the effect you want
- When to present information using a table, chart, or other graphic
- How much text to include in slides or informational graphics
- How to organize graphics so they present information clearly

Your goal is to use visual media to support and enhance your presentation. At the same time, you must make sure these media do not distract your audience or interfere with getting your point across. Your ideas, not your visuals, should be the focus.

As you develop the visual side of your presentation, you will follow a process much like the process you follow when you write. You will brainstorm ideas, form an organizational plan, develop drafts, and then refine and edit your work. The following sections provide guidelines to help you make good decisions throughout the process.

What Makes Visual Aids Effective?

To help you get a sense of what makes visual media work, think about what does not work. Try to recall occasions when you have witnessed the following visual media failures:

- Websites crammed with so many images, flashing phrases, and clashing colors that they are almost unreadable
- Assembly instructions with illustrations or diagrams that are impossible to follow
- Photographs that are obviously (and badly) altered with photo-editing software
- Distracting typos or other errors in signs, advertisements, or headlines
- Tables, charts, or graphs with tiny, dense text or missing labels

In each case, the problem is that the media creator did not think carefully enough about the purpose and audience. The purpose of images, color, or flashing text on a website is to attract attention. Overusing these elements defeats the purpose because the viewer may become overwhelmed or distracted. Tables, charts, and graphs are intended to simplify complex information, but without clear labels and legible text, they will confuse the audience.

In contrast, effective visual elements are chosen or created with the purpose and audience in mind. Although a photo shoot for a magazine article might result in dozens of images, editors choose those few that work best with the article. Web designers and video game creators have an audience test their products before they are released, to ensure that people will understand how to use them. Understanding the function of different visual aids will help you use them with purpose.

Types of Visual Aids

Visual aids fall into two main categories—images and informational graphics. Images include photographs, illustrations and clip art, and video footage. Informational graphics include tables, charts, bar graphs, and line graphs.

These visual aids serve two purposes: to add emotional impact to your presentation and to organize information more clearly. With that in mind, read to find out how specific types of visual aids achieve those purposes.

Photographs

A striking photograph can capture your audience's attention far more successfully than words can. Consider including photographs at the beginning or end of your presentation to emphasize your main ideas or to accompany a particularly important point in the body of your presentation. Remember that, as with other types of graphics, less is often more. Two or three well-chosen photographs are more effective than a dozen mediocre ones.

When you choose photographs, ask yourself these questions:

- What purpose does this image serve? Will it surprise the audience? Will it provoke a strong emotional response? Does it support an important point?
- Will this photograph be more effective if shown with only a caption, or does it need additional text?
- Will the audience understand what is happening in the photograph? Is the meaning immediately evident, or does the photo need some context?
- Would editing the image make it more effective? Consider using image-editing software to crop the photo, change the brightness, or make other cosmetic changes. (Do not go overboard, though. A slightly imperfect but authentic image is preferable to one that has been obviously altered.)

To illustrate the sense of helplessness people felt in the midst of tragedy, a student could use a photograph that shows fear, weariness, or defeat on the face of the photograph's subject.

Figure **10.2.1** - *Neil Moralee – On The Scrap Heap . – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.*

Illustrations

Illustrations, such as editorial or political cartoons, serve much the same purpose as photographs. Because an illustration does not capture a moment in time the way a photo does, it may have less impact. However, depending on your topic and the effect you want to achieve, illustrations can still be very useful. Use the same criteria for choosing photographs to help you choose illustrations.

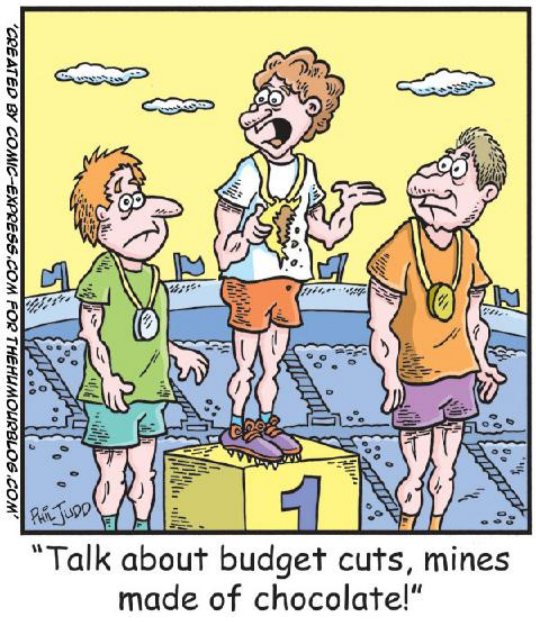

Figure **10.2.2** - *Humor Blog – Political Cartoon about Budget Cuts – CC BY 2.0.*

> **Tip**
>
> The style of an illustration or photograph affects viewers just as the content does. Keep this in mind if you are working with the stock images available in office software programs. Many of these images have a comical tone. This may be fine for some topics—for instance, a presentation on television shows for children. However, if you need to project a more serious tone, make sure you choose images to suit that purpose. Many free (or reasonably priced) image banks are available online.

Video Footage

Even more than photographs, video footage can create a sense of immediacy, especially if your video includes sound. Showing a brief video clip can help your audience feel as if they are present at an important event, connect with a person being interviewed, or better understand a process. Again, ask yourself the following questions to ensure you are using the footage well:

- What purpose does this video serve? (Never rely on video clips just to fill time.)
- How much footage should be shown to achieve your purpose?
- What will need to be explained, before or after showing the video, to ensure that your audience understands its significance?
- Will it be necessary to edit the video to stay within time requirements or to focus on the most important parts?

Tables

Informational graphics, such as tables, charts, and graphs, do not provoke the same response that images do. Nevertheless, these graphics can have a powerful impact. Their primary purpose is to organize and simplify information.

Tables are effective when you must classify information and organize it in categories. Tables are an especially good choice when you are presenting qualitative data that are not strictly numerical. Table 14.1 “Example of Qualitative Data Table” was created for a presentation discussing the subprime mortgage crisis. It presents information about people who have held powerful positions both in the government and at one of the investment banking firms involved in the subprime mortgage market.

Table 14.1 - Example of Qualitative Data Table

Name	Role(s) at Goldman Sachs	Years Active	Government Role(s)	Years Active
Henry Paulson	Chief operating officer	1994–98	US secretary of the treasury	2006–9
	Chief executive officer	1998–2006		
Robert Rubin	Vice chairman and co-chief operating officer	1987–90	Assistant to the president for economic policy and director, National Economic Council	1993–95
	Co-chairman and co-senior partner	1990–92	US secretary of the treasury	1995–99
Stephen Friedman	Co-chief operating officer	1987–90	Assistant to the president for economic policy and director, National Economic Council	2002–5
	Co-chairman	1990–92		
	Chairman	1992–94		

Sources: www.rollingstone.com/politics...B3351,11459%5D; http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/business/19gold.html; http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/henry_m_jr_paulson/index.html?inline=nyt-per; http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/r/robert_e_rubin/index.html?inline=nyt-per, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/13/us/man-in-the-news-economic-adviser-from-other-side-of-the-deficit-stephen-friedman.html; http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/342086.stm.

Tip

If you are working with numerical information, consider whether a pie chart, bar graph, or line graph might be an effective way to present the content. A table can help you organize numerical information, but it is not the most effective way to emphasize contrasting data or to show changes over time.

Pie Charts

Pie charts are useful for showing numerical information in percentages. For example, you can use a pie chart to represent presidential election results by showing what percentage of voters voted for the Democratic presidential candidate, the Republican candidate, and candidates from other political parties.

Figure **10.2.3** - *Source:* http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/fe2008/2008presgeresults.pdf

Bar Graphs

Bar graphs work well when you want to show similarities and differences in numerical data. Horizontal or vertical bars help viewers compare data from different groups, different time periods, and so forth. For instance, the bar graph in Figure 14.2.4 allows the viewer to compare data on the five countries that have won the most Olympic medals since the modern games began in 1924: Norway, the United States, the former Soviet Union, Germany, and Austria. Bar graphs can effectively show trends or patterns in data as well.

Figure **10.2.4** - *Source:* www.nbcolympics.com/medals/al...ngs/index.html

Line Graphs

Like bar graphs, line graphs show trends in data. Line graphs are usually used to show trends in data over time. For example, the line graph in Figure 14.2.5 shows changes in the Dow Jones Industrial Average—an economic index based on trading information about thirty large, US-based public companies. This graph shows where the Dow closed at the end of each business day over a period of five days.

Figure **10.2.5** - *Source:* http://www.google.com/finance/histor...May+21%2C+2010

? Exercise 10.2.1

In this exercise, you will begin to refine your ideas for incorporating media into your presentation. Complete the following steps on your own sheet of paper.

1. Revisit the list you brainstormed for Exercise 3 in Section 14.1 and the annotated outline you developed for Exercise 4.
2. Analyze the two different types of visual aids: images and informational graphics. Identify at least two places in your presentation where you might incorporate visual aids.
3. Evaluate the purpose of the visual aid. Does it create emotional impact, or does it organize information? Is the visual effective?
4. Determine whether you will be able to create the visual aid yourself or will need to find it.

Creating Original Visual Aids

You will include original visual aids in your presentation to add interest, present complex information or data more clearly, or appeal to your audience's emotions. You may wish to create some visual aids by hand—for instance, by mounting photographs on poster board for display. More likely, however, you will use computer-generated graphics.

Computer-generated visual aids are easy to create once you learn how to use certain office software. They also offer greater versatility. You can print hard copies and display them large or include them in a handout for your audience. Or, if you are working with presentation software, you can simply insert the graphics in your slides.

Regardless of how you proceed, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- **Create visual aids with purpose.** Think carefully about how they will enhance your message, and choose a form that is appropriate for your content.
- **Strive for quality.** You do not need the skills of a professional photographer or designer, but do take time to make sure your visual aids are neat, attractive, and legible. Proofread for errors, too.

Using Software to Create Visual Aids

You can use standard office software to create simple graphics easily. The following guidelines describe how to work with word-processing software and presentation software.

Working with Photographs

Most personal computers come equipped with some basic image-editing software, and many people choose to purchase more advanced programs as well. You can upload photographs from a digital camera (or in some cases, a cell phone) or scan and upload printed photographs. The images can then be edited and incorporated into your presentation. Be sure to save all of your images in one folder for easy access.

Creating Tables

To create a table within a word-processing document consult your software program's help feature or an online tutorial. Once you have created the table, you can edit and make any additional changes. Be sure that the table has no more than six to seven rows or columns because you do not want to compromise the size of the text or the readability. Aligning with precision will help your table look less crowded. Also, the row and column titles should spell out their contents.

Creating Graphs

Figure **10.2.6**

Pie charts and bar and line graphs can also be created using standard office software. Although you can create these graphics within a document, you will need to work with both your word-processing application and your spreadsheet application to do so. The graph should visually explain the data using colors, titles, and labels. The use of color will help the audience distinguish

information; however, avoid colors that are hard on the eyes, such as lime green or hot pink. The title should clearly state what the graph explains. Lastly, avoid using acronyms in the titles and other labels.

Creating Graphics in an Electronic Presentation

If you plan to work only with hard copy graphics during your presentation, you may choose to create them as word-processing documents. However, if you are using presentation software, you will need to choose one of the following options:

- Create your graphics using the presentation software program.
- Create your graphics within another program and import them.

Standard office presentation software allows you to create informational graphics in much the same way you would create them within a word-processing application. Keep the formatting palette, a menu option that allows you to customize the graphic, open while you use the software. The formatting menu provides options for inserting other types of graphics, such as pictures and video. You may insert pictures from an image bank available within the program, or insert images or video from your own desktop files. Shape your use of multimedia in accordance with the message your presentation is trying to convey, the purpose, and your audience.

Creating Visual Aids by Hand

Most of the time, using computer-generated graphics is more efficient than creating them by hand. Using office software programs helps give your graphics a polished appearance while also teaching you skills that are useful in a variety of jobs. However, it may make sense to use hand-created visual aids in some cases—for instance, when showing a 3-D model would be effective. If you follow this route, be sure to devote extra time to making sure your visual aids are neat, legible, and professional.

Flip charts are inexpensive and quick visual aids used during face-to-face presentations. The flip chart can be prepared before, as well as during, the presentation. Each sheet of paper should contain one theme, idea, or sketch and must be penned in large letters to be seen by audience members farthest away from the speaker.

Writing Captions

Any media you incorporate should include a caption or other explanatory text. A caption is a brief, one- to two-sentence description or explanation of a visual image. Make sure your captions are clear, accurate, and to the point. Use full sentences when you write them.

Captions should always be used with photographs, and in some cases, they can be useful for clarifying informational graphics, which represent qualitative data visually. However, informational graphics may not require a caption if the title and labels are sufficiently clear. For other visual media, such as video footage, providing explanatory text before or after the footage will suffice. The important thing is to make sure you always include some explanation of the media.

? Exercise 10.2.2

In this exercise, you will begin to develop visual aids for your presentation. Complete the steps in this exercise—and enjoy the chance to be creative. Working with visuals can be a pleasant way to take a break from the demands of writing.

1. Revisit the ideas you developed in Exercise 1. Choose at least two ideas that you can create. (**Note:** If you are using software to develop a slideshow presentation, count this as one of your self-created visual aids. Include at least one other self-created visual aid, such as an original photograph, within your slideshow.)
2. Get creative! Take your photographs, construct a 3-D model, create informational graphics, or work on your presentation slides. Develop good working drafts.
3. After you have completed drafts of your visual aids, set them aside for a while. Then revisit them with a critical eye. First, check any text included with the graphic. Make sure your facts are correct, your words are clear and concise, and your language is free of errors.
4. Next, evaluate how well your aids work visually. Are they large enough to be seen and read from a distance? Are captions and labels easy to find? Are photographs of reasonably high quality? Ask someone else for feedback, too.

5. Begin making any needed changes. As you proceed through the rest of this section, continue to revisit your work to improve it as needed.

Collaboration

Please share the first version of your visual aids with a classmate. Examine what they have produced. On a separate piece of paper, note both the elements that catch your attention and those that would benefit from clarification. Return and compare notes.

Testing and Evaluating Visual Aids

Regardless of how you create your visual aids, be sure to test-drive them before you deliver your presentation. Edit and proofread them, and if possible, show them to someone who can give you objective feedback. Use the following checklist.

Checklist 14.1

Visual Aid Evaluation Checklist

- Visual aids are clearly integrated with the content of the presentation
- Photographs and illustrations suit the overall tone of the presentation
- Images and text are large and clear enough for the viewer to see or read
- Images are shown with explanatory text or a caption
- Informational graphics include clear, easy-to-read labels and headings
- Text within informational graphics is easy to read (Watch out for wordiness and crowded text or a font that is too small and hard to read.)
- Formatting choices (color, different fonts, etc.) organize information effectively
- Any text within graphics is free of errors
- Hyperlinks within slides function properly
- Display text for hyperlinks is concise and informative (Never paste a link into a slide without modifying the display text.)

Writing at Work

Office software includes many options for personalizing a presentation. For instance, you can choose or create a theme and color scheme, modify how one slide transitions to the next, or even include sound effects. With so many options, students and employees sometimes get carried away. The result can seem amateurish and detract from, rather than enhance, your presentation.

Remember, you are delivering a presentation, not producing a movie. Use the customization options to help give your presentations a consistent, polished, appearance. However, do not let these special effects detract from the substance of your slides.

Using Existing Visual Media

Depending on your topic, you may be able to find images and other graphics you can use instead of creating your own. For instance, you might use photographs from a reputable news source or informational graphics created by a government agency. If you plan to use visual aids created by others, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- **Set a purpose before you begin your search.** You will search more efficiently if you start with a general idea of what you are looking for—a line graph of unemployment rates for the past twelve months, for example, or a video clip of the most recent State of the Union address.
- **Filter out visual aids that are not relevant.** You may come across eye-catching graphics and be tempted to use them even if they are only loosely related to your topic, simply because they are attention getting. Resist the temptation. If the graphic is not clearly connected to your point, it does not belong in your presentation.
- **Read carefully.** In addition to reading labels, headings, and captions, read any text that accompanies the visual. Make sure you understand the visual in its original context. For informational graphics, make sure you understand exactly what information is

being represented. (This may seem obvious, but it is easy to misread graphic information. Take the time to examine it carefully.)

- **Evaluate sources carefully and record source information.** When you look for visual media to complement your presentation, you are conducting research. Apply the same standards you used for your research paper. Choose reliable sources, such as reputable news organizations, government and nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions. Verify data in additional sources. Finally, be sure to document all source information as you proceed.

Searching Efficiently for Visual Media

You will probably find it most efficient to use the Internet to search for visual aids. Many students begin by typing keywords into a search engine to locate related images. However, this search technique is not necessarily efficient, for several reasons:

- It often pulls up hundreds or even thousands of images, which may be only loosely related to your search terms.
- It can sometimes be difficult to understand the image in its original context.
- It can be hard to find copyright information about how you may use the image.

A more efficient strategy is to identify a few sources that are likely to have what you are looking for, and then search within those sites. For instance, if you need a table showing average life expectancy in different countries, you might begin with the website of the World Health Organization. If you hope to find images related to current events, news publications are an obvious choice. The Library of Congress website includes many media related to American history, culture, and politics.

Searching this way has the following advantages:

- You will often find what you are looking for faster because you are not wasting time scrolling through many irrelevant results.
- If you have chosen your sources well, you can be reasonably certain that you are getting accurate, up-to-date information.
- Images and informational graphics produced by reputable sources are likely to be high quality—easy to read and well designed.

If you do choose to use a search engine to help you locate visual media, make sure you use it wisely. Begin with a clear idea of what you are looking for. Use the advanced search settings to narrow your search. When you locate a relevant image, do not download it immediately. Read the page or site to make sure you understand the image in context. Finally, read the site's copyright or terms of use policy—usually found at the bottom of the home page—to make sure you may use the material.

If you are unable to find what you are looking for on the Internet consider using print sources of visual media. You may choose to mount these for display or scan them and incorporate the files into an electronic presentation. (Scanning printed pages may lower the quality of the image. However, if you are skilled at using photo-editing software, you may be able to improve the quality of the scanned image.)

Inserting Hyperlinks in an Electronic Presentation

If you are working with images, audio, or video footage available online, you may wish to insert a link within your presentation. Then, during your presentation, you can simply click the link to open the website in a separate window and toggle between windows to return to your presentation slides.

To insert a hyperlink within your presentation, click on insert in the toolbar and then select hyperlink from the menu. Doing so will open a dialogue box where you can paste your link and modify the accompanying display text shown on your slide.

Copyright and Fair Use

Before you download (or scan) any visual media, make sure you have the right to use it. Most websites state their copyright and terms of use policy on their home page. In general, you may not use other people's visual media for any commercial purpose without contacting the copyright holder to obtain permission and pay any specified fees.

Copyright restrictions are somewhat more ambiguous when you wish to download visual media for educational uses. Some educational uses of copyrighted materials are generally considered fair use—meaning that it is legally and ethically acceptable to use the material in your work. However, do not assume that because you are using the media for an educational purpose, you are automatically in the clear. Make sure your work meets the guidelines in the following checklist. If it does, you can be reasonably confident that it would be considered fair use in a court of law and always give credit to the source.

Checklist 14.2

Media Fair Use Checklist

- You are using the media for educational purposes only.
- You will make the work available only for a short period and to a limited audience. For instance, showing a copyrighted image in a classroom presentation is acceptable. Posting a presentation with copyrighted images online is problematic. In addition, avoid any uses that would allow other people to easily access and reproduce the work.
- You have used only as much of the work as needed for your purposes. For video and audio footage, limit your use to no more than 10 percent of the media—five minutes of an hour-long television show, for example. Image use is harder to quantify, but you should avoid using many images from the same source.
- You are using the media to support your own ideas, not replace them. Your use should include some commentary or place the media in context. It should be a supporting player in your presentation—not the star of the show.
- You have obtained the material legally. Purchase the media if necessary rather than using illegally pirated material.
- Your use of the media will not affect the copyright holder or benefit you financially.

By following these guidelines, you are respecting the copyright holder's right to control the distribution of the work and to profit from it.

writing at work

In some fields, such as teaching, job applicants often submit a professional portfolio to a prospective employer. Recent college graduates may include relevant course work in their portfolios or in applications to graduate school. What should you do if your course work uses copyrighted visual media?

This use of media is acceptable according to fair use guidelines. Even though you are using the work for your personal professional advancement, it is not considered an infringement on copyright as long as you follow the additional guidelines listed in the previous checklist.

Crediting Sources

As you conduct your research, make sure you document sources as you proceed. Follow the guidelines when you download images, video, or other media from the Internet or capture media from other sources. Keep track of where you accessed the media and where you can find additional information about it. You may also provide a references page at the end of the presentation to cite not only media and images but also the information in the text of your presentation. See Chapter 13 for more information on creating a reference page.

Write captions or other explanatory text for visual media created by others, just as you would for media you created. Doing so helps keep your audience informed. It also helps ensure that you are following fair use guidelines by presenting the media with your commentary, interpretation, or analysis. In your caption or elsewhere in your presentation, note the source of any media you did not create yourself. You do not need to provide a full bibliographical citation, but do give credit where it is due.

Exercise 10.2.3

In this exercise, you will locate visual aids created by others and continue developing the work you began earlier. Complete these steps.

1. Revisit the ideas you developed in Exercise 1. Choose at least two ideas for which it would make more sense to find the visual aid than to create it yourself.
2. Use the search tips provided in this section to locate at least two visual aids from reputable sources that you can use. Prepare them for your presentation by adding clarifying text as needed. Be sure to credit your source.
3. Incorporate the visual aids you created in Exercise 2 and Exercise 3 into your presentation. This may involve preparing physical copies for display or inserting graphic files into an electronic presentation.
4. Take some time now to review how you will integrate the visual and verbal components of your presentation.

- If you are working with presentation software, refine your slides. Make sure the visual approach is consistent and suits your topic. Give your text a final proofread.
- If you are not using presentation software, review the annotated outline you created in Exercise 1. Update it as needed to reflect your current plan. Also, determine how you will physically set up your visual aids.

Key Takeaways

- Visual aids are most effective when they are chosen with the purpose and audience in mind. They serve to add emotional impact to a presentation and to organize information more clearly.
- Visual aids should always be clearly related to the presenter's ideas. Captions, labels, and other explanatory text help make the connection clear for the audience.
- Like writing, developing the visual components of a presentation is a process. It involves generating ideas, working with them in a draft format, and then revising and editing one's work.
- Visual aids can be divided into two broad categories—image-based media and informational graphics.
- Widely available software programs make it relatively easy to create visual aids electronically, such as photo images, charts, and graphs.
- When using visual aids created by others, it is important to apply good research skills, follow guidelines for fair use, and credit sources appropriately.

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10.3: Giving a Presentation

Learning Objectives

- Recognize characteristics of effective speakers.
- Identify the benefits of rehearsing a presentation in advance.
- Plan for parts of the presentation that cannot be fully rehearsed in advance, such as a question-and-answer session.
- Apply strategies for reducing anxiety about public speaking.

By this time, you have already completed much of the preparation for your presentation. You have organized your ideas and planned both the textual and visual components of your presentation. Still, you may not feel quite ready to speak in front of a group.

Public speaking is stressful. In fact, some researchers have found that a large percentage of people surveyed rate public speaking as their number one fear. Most people feel at least a little bit nervous at the prospect of public speaking.

At the same time, it is an increasingly necessary skill in the workplace. A human resource manager presents company policies and benefits plans to large groups of employees. An entrepreneur presents the idea for a new business to potential investors. A nurse might chair a staff meeting to introduce new hospital procedures. A police officer might present crime-prevention tips at a community meeting. In some fields, such as training and teaching, speaking in public is a regular job requirement.

In this section, you will learn strategies for becoming a confident, effective speaker. You have already taken the major steps toward making your presentation successful, as a result of the content planning you did in Section 14.1 and Section 14.2. Now, it is time to plan and practice your delivery.

What Makes a Speaker Effective?

Think about times you have been part of the audience for a speech, lecture, or other presentation. You have probably noticed how certain traits and mannerisms work to engage you and make the experience enjoyable. Effective speakers project confidence and interest in both their audience and their subject matter. They present ideas clearly and come across as relaxed but in control.

In contrast, less effective speakers may seem anxious or, worse, apathetic. They may be difficult to hear or understand, or their body language may distract from their message. They have trouble making a connection with their audience. This can happen even when the speaker knows his or her material and has prepared effective visual aids.

In both cases, two factors contribute to your overall impression of the speaker: voice and body language. The following sections discuss specific points to focus on.

Finding Your Voice

Most people do not think much about how their voices come across in everyday conversations. Talking to other people feels natural. Unfortunately, speaking in public does not, and that can affect your voice. For instance, many people talk faster when they give presentations, because they are nervous and want to finish quickly. In addition, some traits that do not matter too much in ordinary conversation, such as a tendency to speak quietly, can be a problem when speaking to a group. Think about the characteristics discussed in the following section and how your own voice might come across.

Resonance

One quality of a good speaking voice is resonance, meaning strength, depth, and force. This word is related to the word *resonate*. Resonant speech begins at the speaker's vocal cords and resonates throughout the upper body. The speaker does not simply use his or her mouth to form words, but instead projects from the lungs and chest. (That is why having a cold can make it hard to speak clearly.)

Some people happen to have powerful, resonant voices. But even if your voice is naturally softer or higher pitched, you can improve it with practice.

- Take a few deep breaths before you begin rehearsing.

- Hum a few times, gradually lowering the pitch so that you feel the vibration not only in your throat but also in your chest and diaphragm.
- Try to be conscious of that vibration and of your breathing while you speak. You may not feel the vibration as intensely, but you should feel your speech resonate in your upper body, and you should feel as though you are breathing easily.
- Keep practicing until it feels natural.

Enunciation

Enunciation refers to how clearly you articulate words while speaking. Try to pronounce words as clearly and accurately as you can, enunciating each syllable. Avoid mumbling or slurring words. As you rehearse your presentation, practice speaking a little more slowly and deliberately. Ask someone you know to give you feedback.

Volume

Volume is simply how loudly or softly you speak. Shyness, nervousness, or overenthusiasm can cause people to speak too softly or too loudly, which may make the audience feel frustrated or put off. Here are some tips for managing volume effectively:

- Afraid of being too loud, many people speak too quietly. As a rule, aim to use a slightly louder volume for public speaking than you use in conversation.
- Consider whether you might be an exception to the rule. If you know you tend to be loud, you might be better off using your normal voice or dialing back a bit.
- Think about volume in relation to content. Main points should usually be delivered with more volume and force. However, lowering your voice at crucial points can also help draw in your audience or emphasize serious content.

Pitch

Pitch refers to how high or low a speaker's voice is. The overall pitch of people's voices varies among individuals. We also naturally vary our pitch when speaking. For instance, our pitch gets higher when we ask a question and often when we express excitement. It often gets lower when we give a command or want to convey seriousness.

A voice that does not vary in pitch sounds monotonous, like a musician playing the same note repeatedly. Keep these tips in mind to manage pitch:

- Pitch, like volume, should vary with your content. Evaluate your voice to make sure you are not speaking at the same pitch throughout your presentation.
- It is fine to raise your pitch slightly at the end of a sentence when you ask a question. However, some speakers do this for every sentence, and as a result, they come across as tentative and unsure. Notice places where your pitch rises, and make sure the change is appropriate to the content.
- Lower your pitch when you want to convey authority. But do not overdo it. Questions should sound different from statements and commands.
- Chances are, your overall pitch falls within a typical range. However, if your voice is very high or low, consciously try to lower or raise it slightly.

Pace

Pace is the speed or rate at which you speak. Speaking too fast makes it hard for an audience to follow the presentation. The audience may become impatient.

Many less experienced speakers tend to talk faster when giving a presentation because they are nervous, want to get the presentation over with, or fear that they will run out of time. If you find yourself rushing during your rehearsals, try these strategies:

- Take a few deep breaths before you speak. Make sure you are not forgetting to breathe during your presentation.
- Identify places where a brief, strategic pause is appropriate—for instance, when transitioning from one main point to the next. Build these pauses into your presentation.
- If you still find yourself rushing, you may need to edit your presentation content to ensure that you stay within the allotted time.

If, on the other hand, your pace seems sluggish, you will need to liven things up. A slow pace may stem from uncertainty about your content. If that is the case, additional practice should help you. It also helps to break down how much time you plan to spend on each part of the presentation and then make sure you are adhering to your plan.

Tip

Pace affects not only your physical presentation but also the point of view; slowing down the presentation may allow your audience to further comprehend and consider your topic. Pace may also refer to the rate at which PowerPoint slides appear. If either the slide or the animation on the slide automatically appears, make sure the audience has adequate time to read the information or view the animation before the presentation continues.

Tone

Tone is the emotion you convey when speaking—excitement, annoyance, nervousness, lightheartedness, and so forth. Various factors, such as volume, pitch, and body language, affect how your tone comes across to your audience.

Before you begin rehearsing your presentation, think about what tone is appropriate for the content. Should you sound forceful, concerned, or matter-of-fact? Are there places in your presentation where a more humorous or more serious tone is appropriate? Think about the tone you should project, and practice setting that tone.

Exercise 10.3.1

In this exercise, you will work on refining the oral delivery of the annotated outline you developed in Exercise 4 of Section 14.1.

1. Set up a microphone to record yourself. (You may use a webcam if you wish.) For this exercise, assess yourself on your verbal delivery only, not your body language.)
2. Rehearse and record your presentation.
3. Replay the recording and assess yourself using the following criteria: resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone. Rate yourself from one to five on each criterion, with five being the highest rating. Determine which areas are strengths and which areas you need to improve.
4. If you wish, ask another person to evaluate your presentation.

The Power of Body Language

The nonverbal content of a presentation is just as important as the verbal delivery. A person's body language—eye contact, facial expressions, posture, gestures, and movement—communicates a powerful message to an audience before any words are spoken.

People interpret and respond to each other's body language instinctively. When you talk to someone, you notice whether the other person is leaning forward or hanging back, nodding in agreement or disagreement, looking at you attentively or looking away. If your listener slouches, fidgets, or stares into space, you interpret these nonverbal cues as signs of discomfort or boredom. In everyday conversations, people often communicate through body language without giving it much conscious thought. Mastering this aspect of communication is a little more challenging, however, when you are giving a presentation. As a speaker, you are onstage. It is not easy to see yourself as your audience sees you.

Think about times you have been part of a speaker's audience. You have probably seen some presenters who seemed to own the room, projecting confidence and energy and easily connecting with the audience. Other presenters may have come across as nervous, gloomy, or disengaged. How did body language make a difference?

Three factors work together powerfully to convey a nonverbal message: eye contact, posture, and movement.

Eye Contact and Facial Expressions

"Maintain eye contact" is a common piece of public-speaking advice—so common it may sound elementary and clichéd. Why is that simple piece of advice so hard to follow?

Maintaining eye contact may not be as simple as it sounds. In everyday conversation, people establish eye contact but then look away from time to time, because staring into someone's eyes continuously feels uncomfortably intense. Two or three people conversing can establish a comfortable pattern of eye contact. But how do you manage that when you are addressing a group?

The trick is to focus on one person at a time. Zero in on one person, make eye contact, and maintain it just long enough to establish a connection. (A few seconds will suffice.) Then move on. This way, you connect with your audience, one person at a time. As you proceed, you may find that some people hold your gaze and others look away quickly. That is fine, as long as you connect with people in different parts of the room.

Pay attention to your facial expressions as well. If you have thought about how you want to convey emotion during different parts of your presentation, you are probably already monitoring your facial expressions as you rehearse. Be aware that the pressure of presenting can make your expression serious or tense without your realizing it.

Tip

If you are speaking to a very large group, it may be difficult to make eye contact with each individual. Instead, focus on a smaller group of persons or one row of people at time. Look in their direction for a few seconds and then shift your gaze to another small group in the room.

Posture

While eye contact establishes a connection with your audience, your posture establishes your confidence. Stand straight and tall with your head held high to project confidence and authority. Slouching or drooping, on the other hand, conveys timidity, uncertainty, or lack of interest in your own presentation.

It will not seem natural, but practice your posture in front of a mirror. Take a deep breath and let it out. Stand upright and imagine a straight line running from your shoulders to your hips to your feet. Rock back and forth slightly on the balls of your feet until your weight feels balanced. You should not be leaning forward, backward, or to either side. Let your arms and hands hang loosely at your sides, relaxed but not limp. Then lift your chin slightly and look into your own eyes. Do you feel more confident?

You might not just yet. In fact, you may feel overly self-conscious or downright silly. In time, however, maintaining good posture will come more naturally, and it will improve your effectiveness as a speaker.

Tip

Nervousness affects posture. When feeling tense, people often hunch up their shoulders without realizing it. (Doing so just makes them feel even tenser and may inhibit breathing, which can affect your delivery.) As you rehearse, relax your shoulders so they are not hunched forward or pushed back unnaturally far. Stand straight but not rigid. Do not try to suck in your stomach or push out your chest unnaturally. You do not need to stand like a military officer, just a more confident version of yourself.

Movement and Gestures

The final piece of body language that helps tie your presentation together is your use of gestures and movement. A speaker who barely moves may come across as wooden or lacking energy and emotion. Excessive movement and gestures, on the other hand, are distracting. Strive for balance.

A little movement can do a lot to help you connect with your audience and add energy to your presentation. Try stepping forward toward your audience at key moments where you really want to establish that personal connection. Consider where you might use gestures such as pointing, holding up your hand, or moving your hands for emphasis. Avoid putting your hands in your pockets or clasping them in front of or behind you.

writing at work

When you give a presentation at work, wearing the right outfit can help you feel more poised and confident. The right attire can also help you avoid making distracting gestures. While you talk, you do not want to be tugging on necktie tied too tight or wobbling on flimsy high-heeled shoes. Choose clothing that is appropriately professional and comfortable.

Exercise 10.3.2

In this exercise, present the same oral presentation from Exercise 1, but this time, evaluate your body language.

1. Set up a video camera to record yourself, or ask someone else to evaluate you.
2. Rehearse and, if applicable, record your presentation.
3. Replay the recording and assess yourself (or have your companion assess you) on the following criteria: eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures. Rate yourself from one to five on each criterion, with five being the highest rating. Determine in which areas you have strength and in which areas you need to improve.

Rehearsing Your Presentation and Making Final Preparations

Practice is essential if you want your presentation to be effective. Speaking in front of a group is a complicated task because there are so many components to stay on top of—your words, your visual aids, your voice, and your body language. If you are new to public speaking, the task can feel like juggling eggs while riding a unicycle. With experience, it gets easier, but even experienced speakers benefit from practice.

Take the time to rehearse your presentation more than once. Each time you go through it, pick another element to refine. For instance, once you are comfortable with the overall verbal content, work on integrating your visuals. Then focus on your vocal delivery and your body language. Multiple practice sessions will help you integrate all of these components into a smooth, effective presentation.

Practice in front of another person (or a small group) at least once. Practicing with a test audience will help you grow accustomed to interacting with other people as you talk, and it will give you a chance to get feedback from someone else's perspective. Your audience can help you identify areas to improve.

Just as important as identifying areas for improvement, your audience can encourage you not to be too hard on yourself. When preparing for an oral presentation, many people are their own worst critics. They are hyperconscious of any flaws in their presentation, real or imagined. A test audience can provide honest feedback from a neutral observer who can provide support and constructive critique.

Managing Your Environment

Part of being a good presenter is managing your environment effectively. Your environment may be the space, the sound levels, and any tools or equipment you will use. Take these factors into account as you rehearse. Consider the following questions:

- Will you have enough space to move around in? Consider whether you might need to rearrange chairs or tables in the room in advance.
- Do you have enough space to display your visual aids? If you are using slides, where will you project the images?
- Will the lighting in the room need to be adjusted for your presentation? If so, where are the light switches located? How are window coverings opened or closed?
- Will your audience be able to hear you? Does the environment have any distracting noises, such as heating or cooling vents, outside traffic, or noisy equipment or machines? If so, how can you minimize the problem? Will you need a microphone?
- Do you have access to any technical equipment you need, such as a laptop computer, a projector, or a CD or DVD player? Are electrical outlets conveniently placed and functional?

You may not be able to control every aspect of the environment to your liking. However, by thinking ahead, you can make the best of the space you have to work in. If you have a chance to rehearse in that environment, do so.

Engaging Your Audience: Planning a Question-and-Answer Session

Rehearsing your presentation will help you feel confident and in control. The most effective presenters do not simply rehearse the content they will deliver. They also think about how they will interact with their audience and respond effectively to audience input.

An effective way to interact is to plan a brief question-and-answer (Q&A) session to follow your presentation. Set aside a few minutes of your allotted time to address audience questions. Plan ahead. Try to anticipate what questions your audience might have, so you can be prepared to answer them. You probably will not have enough time to cover everything you know about the topic in your presentation. A Q&A session can give you an opportunity to fill in any gaps for your audience.

Finally, accept that interacting with your audience means going with the flow and giving up a little of your control. If someone asks a question you were not anticipating and cannot answer, simply admit you do not know and make a note to follow up.

✔ writing at work

Increasingly, employees need to manage a virtual environment when giving presentations in the workplace. You might need to conduct a webinar, a live presentation, meeting, workshop, or lecture delivered over the web; run an online Q&A chat session; or coordinate a conference call involving multiple time zones.

Preparation and rehearsal can help ensure that a virtual presentation goes smoothly. Complete a test run of any software you will use. Ask a coworker to assist you to ensure that both you and the audience have all the tools needed and that the tools are in working order. Make sure you have contact information for all the key meeting attendees. Finally, know whom to call if something goes wrong, and have a backup plan.

? Exercise 10.3.3

If you have not yet rehearsed in front of an audience, now is the time. Ask a peer (or a small group of people) to observe your presentation, provide a question-and-answer session, and have your audience provide feedback on the following:

- The overall quality of your content (clarity, organization, level of detail)
- The effectiveness of your visual aids
- Your vocal delivery (resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone)
- The effectiveness of your body language (eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures)
- Your response to questions the audience posed during the question-and-answer session

Use your audience's feedback to make any final adjustments to your presentation. For example, could you clarify your presentation to reduce the number of questions—or enhance the quality of the questions—the audience asked during the question-and-answer session?

Coping with Public-Speaking Anxiety

The tips in this chapter should help you reduce any nervousness you may feel about public speaking. Although most people are a little anxious about talking to a group, the task usually becomes less intimidating with experience and practice.

Preparation and practice are the best defenses against public-speaking anxiety. If you have made a serious effort to prepare and rehearse, you can be confident that your efforts will pay off. If you still feel shaky, try the following strategies:

- Take care of your health. In the days leading up to your presentation, make sure you get plenty of sleep and eat right. Exercise to help cope with tension. Avoid caffeine if it makes you jittery.
- Use relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, and stretching to help you feel calm and focused on the day of your presentation.
- Visualize yourself giving a successful presentation. Image yourself succeeding. It will make you feel more confident.
- Put things into perspective. What is the worst that could happen if anything went wrong? Many people have given less-than-perfect presentations and lived to tell about it! Of course, you should make your best effort, but if something does go wrong, you can use it as a learning experience.

- Understand that you may not be able to overcome your nervousness completely. Feeling a little anxious can help you stay alert and focused. If you do not feel confident, try to "fake it until you make it."

? Exercise 10.3.4

To practice overcoming public-speaking anxiety, ask a family member, coworker, or peer to view a rehearsal of the presentation. Schedule the rehearsal at a time that works for you, and plan to get plenty of rest the night before. After the presentation, answer the following questions.

1. When did you feel most nervous during the presentation? Make a note on your outline of the most nervous moments. Next to this note, add one strategy that may ease your anxiety. For example, you could add a reminder to relax, such as, "Take a deep breath here!" or a few words of encouragement, such as, "You are doing a great job!"
2. Ask your rehearsal audience for feedback on which moments of the presentation seemed most nerve wrecking for you. What nonverbal or verbal clues indicated to your audience that you were nervous? Which were most distracting to the audience? Make a note of these clues and practice the presentation again; be aware of how you show your anxiety and try to lessen these distractions.

Key Takeaways

- Delivering an effective speech requires paying attention to both verbal delivery and body language.
- Good speakers rehearse their presentation and, if necessary, get feedback from others to help them refine their presentation before they deliver it.
- Monitoring one's vocal delivery involves paying attention to resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone.
- Monitoring one's body language involves paying attention to eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures.
- Good speakers plan ahead to help them manage the presentation effectively.

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10.E: Creating Presentations - Sharing Your Ideas (Exercises)

1. Identify a topic of personal interest to you that you would enjoy presenting. (It is best to choose a topic you already know something about.) Create a brief, informal presentation—about three minutes and no more than five to six slides. You may conduct some research if necessary, but this exercise does not need to be extensively researched. Instead, focus on summarizing your main points concisely and using visuals effectively. If possible, share your presentation with a partner and evaluate each other's work.

2. Conduct an Internet search to find examples of strong and weak slideshow presentations. Determine the reasons why each presentation is or is not successful. Consider the following elements:

- The number of slides and the amount of information presented overall
- The amount of information on each slide and how well it is organized
- The ratio of text to graphics
- The clarity and appropriateness of the graphics
- The use of special formatting, sounds, slide transitions, and so on

3. It is sometimes difficult to evaluate one's own speaking skills. It is very helpful to rehearse and record yourself. Use the questions from the following list that to determine if your presentation needs additional work. If possible, have a partner evaluate your presentation.

- Is the presentation clear, concise, and organized? Would your audience understand your main point and supporting points?
- Are your visual aids relevant, appropriate, and effective? What changes (if any) are needed?
- Is your vocal delivery effective? If possible, have a partner evaluate your presentation on the following criteria: resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone.
- Are you using your body language effectively? If possible, have a partner evaluate your eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures.

4. View one or more television infomercials. Evaluate the presentations using the following questions:

- Does the presenter deliver information clearly and engage the audience? Does the infomercial fulfill its purpose—to convince the audience to buy the product?
- Does the presenter use visual aids effectively? How?
- Is the presenter's vocal delivery effective? Why or why not?
- Is the presenter's body language effective? How does the presenter use body language to connect with the television audience and to emphasize the product's value?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Grammar Essentials

11.1: Punctuation

11.1.1: Apostrophes

11.1.2: Brackets

11.1.3: Colons

11.1.4: Commas

11.1.5: Dashes

11.1.6: Ellipses

11.1.7: Exclamation Marks

11.1.8: Hyphens

11.1.9: Parentheses

11.1.10: Periods

11.1.11: Question Marks

11.1.12: Quotation Marks

11.1.13: Semicolons

11.1.14: Try It Out

11.1.15: Putting It All Together

11.1.16: Time to Write

11.2: Parts of Speech

11.2.1: Nouns

11.2.2: Pronouns

11.2.3: Verbs

11.2.4: Adjectives

11.2.5: Adverbs

11.2.6: Propositions

11.2.7: Articles

11.2.8: Conjunctions

11.2.9: Interjections

11.2.10: Try It Out

11.2.11: Putting It All Together

11.2.12: Time to Write

11.3: 20 Most Common Grammar Errors

11.3.1: Wrong Word

11.3.2: Comma After Introductory Element

11.3.3: Documentation Common Error

11.3.4: Pronoun Reference

11.3.5: Spelling

11.3.6: Quotation Error

11.3.7: Unnecessary Comma

11.3.8: Capitalization

11.3.9: Missing Word

11.3.10: Faulty Sentence Structure
11.3.11: Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element
11.3.12: Verb Tense Shift
11.3.13: Missing Comma in Compound Sentence
11.3.14: Apostrophe Errors
11.3.15: Run-On Sentences
11.3.16: Comma Splice
11.3.17: Pronoun Agreement
11.3.18: Poorly Integrated Quote
11.3.19: Hyphens
11.3.20: Sentence Fragment
11.3.21: Try It Out
11.3.22: Putting It All Together
11.3.23: Time to Write

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SECTION OVERVIEW

11.1: Punctuation

Maybe you have heard the story about how punctuation saves lives. Clearly, there is a difference between:

- Let’s eat, Grandma!

and

- Let’s eat Grandma!

In addition to saving lives, using punctuation properly will help your writing be clean and clear and help you build your credibility as a writer.

The following sections will provide you with an overview of the basic rules regarding punctuation and will give you a chance to practice using the information you have learned.

11.1.1: Apostrophes

11.1.2: Brackets

11.1.3: Colons

11.1.4: Commas

11.1.5: Dashes

11.1.6: Ellipses

11.1.7: Exclamation Marks

11.1.8: Hyphens

11.1.9: Parentheses

11.1.10: Periods

11.1.11: Question Marks

11.1.12: Quotation Marks

11.1.13: Semicolons

11.1.14: Try It Out

11.1.15: Putting It All Together

11.1.16: Time to Write

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11.1.1: Apostrophes

Apostrophes

Do we really need apostrophes?

When you send a text message, you probably do not bother with apostrophes right? It makes sense that we might not worry about properly punctuating possessives and contractions in a text message, but it's very important to remember that we do need to use apostrophes correctly in other writing situations.

Academics frequently debate about whether or not text messaging is going to kill the poor apostrophe. In his essay "Dear Apostrophe: C Ya," Rob Jenkins (2012) writes, "[O]ne of my professors, talking about the way language evolves over time, predicted that the next evolutionary stage would involve common punctuation marks. Specifically, he said, the apostrophe would eventually cease to exist" (para. 1).

This may be true, but the apostrophe is not dead yet!

So if you have been text messaging so long that you forgot what the apostrophe is for, the following pages should be helpful.

Possessives

Using Apostrophes to Make Words Possessive

Beginning writers sometimes mistakenly add apostrophes to make words plural, but this is not how the apostrophe is used; the apostrophe is used to show possession or ownership.

Examples:

- Sam's game plan
- My friend's DVD
- Beth's zombie

Here's a test you can use to determine whether an apostrophe is needed—we call it the "of" test. In other words, can you reword the sentence and substitute the apostrophe with "of"?

Using an Apostrophe	Using “of” test
my friend’s DVD	the DVD of my friend
Beth’s zombie plan	the zombie plan of Beth
James’ canned goods*	the canned goods of James
*James’ is all	

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If you just mean to make a word plural, you should not add an apostrophe. Here is an example of incorrect usage:

The student's planned to buy their books but played Xbox instead.

Here, you would not use an apostrophe because there is no ownership being established. You can double-check this example and see that this use of the apostrophe would not pass the "of" test.

The planned of the students just does not make sense.

The sentence above would not pass the test and should read as follows:

The students planned to buy their books but played Xbox instead.

Plural Possessives

Making plural words possessive can be confusing at times because we so often add an s to a noun to make it plural. All of those s's can be a little overwhelming.

But the rules are pretty clear on this issue.

To make plural nouns that do not end in s possessive, add 's.

- The children's scary books
- The mice's tiny tails

To make plural nouns that end in s possessive, add just the '.

- My cats' treasures
- Our zombie fortresses' weaknesses

Contractions

Using Apostrophes to Create Contractions

Apostrophes are also used in contractions where the apostrophe takes the place of letters that are omitted when you join two words. Here are some examples:

- I am = I'm
- You are = you're
- It is = it's
- Did not = didn't

You can also use an apostrophe to stand in for omitted numbers.

- I was born in '75, and I'm feeling old.

It's important to note that contractions and using apostrophes to stand in for omitted numbers are generally considered too informal for formal, academic writing.

Some students wonder why they should bother learning these rules, then. The answer is that there are plenty of writing situations where contractions are appropriate. It's just that contractions are too informal for most of the formal papers you write for college and should be avoided in those situations.

Tips from the Professor

While most of the rules regarding apostrophes are pretty straightforward, there are some situations related to apostrophes that seem to give a lot of people a lot of trouble. Here are some helpful tips:

- It's is a contraction for it is. If you need to make it possessive, as in its creepy eyes, you shouldn't use an apostrophe. Because of the contraction, the possessive its goes against the normal rules.
- Sometimes, you'll see writers use an apostrophe when referring to decades like the 1980's. However, it's standard now to write the 1980s without the apostrophe.
- To make a compound word such as mother-in-law possessive, just add an 's to the last word. Here is an example:
  - My mother-in-law's weekly phone calls make me really nervous.
- If you need to show joint possession, only the last word should be made possessive, as illustrated in this example:
  - Alex and Megan's zombie-proof fence is certainly admirable.

Watch this video of the grammar professor, as she helps her student understand how to use apostrophes correctly.

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11.1.2: Brackets

Brackets

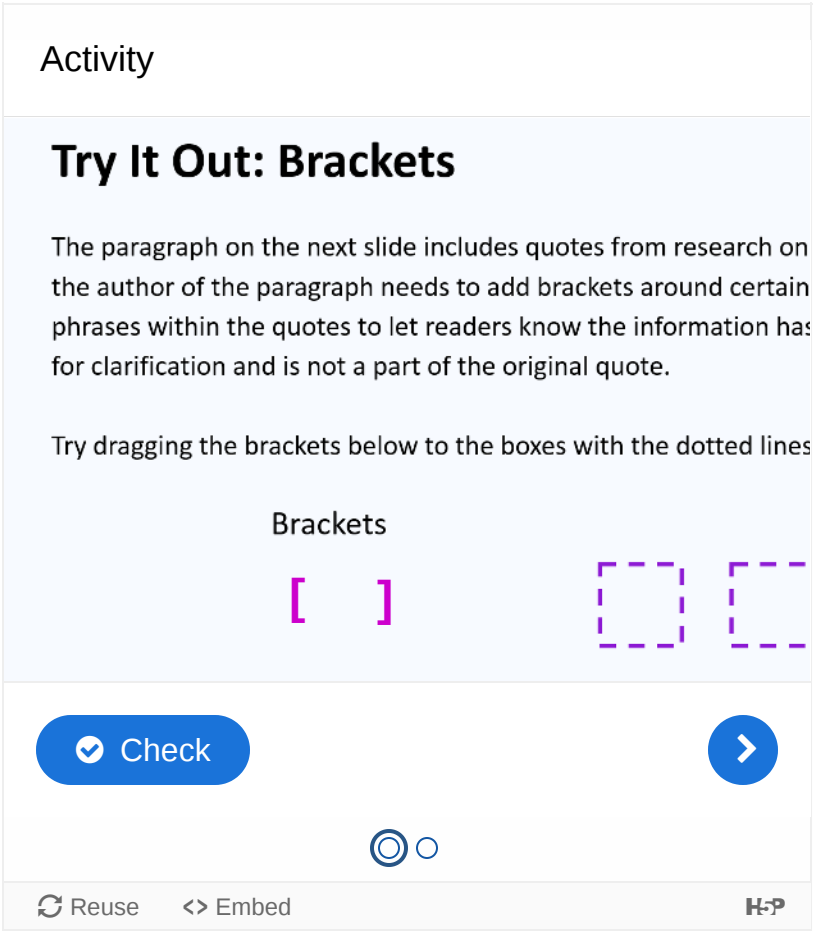
Using Brackets for Clarity

You may not use brackets often, but they can become helpful punctuation in academic writing as you integrate quotes into your essays. You should use brackets when you have to alter text within a quote to make something clear for your readers.

The brackets let your readers know you have made changes to the quote in some way. The material inside the brackets is your addition.

For example, if you need to add information to a quote for clarity, you would use brackets.

- She said, “They [the vampire hunters] were after me, but it was all a big mistake.”
  - Here, your readers would know the vampire hunters were not a part of that particular quote and you added the words for clarity.



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11.1.3: Colons

Colons

When do you use the colon?

Many writers think the colon is such a confusing piece of punctuation that they simply avoid it altogether, but it can be fun to use a colon every now and then. Plus, the colon can add some important variety and excitement to your writing. So why not review this list of uses for the colon and give it a try?

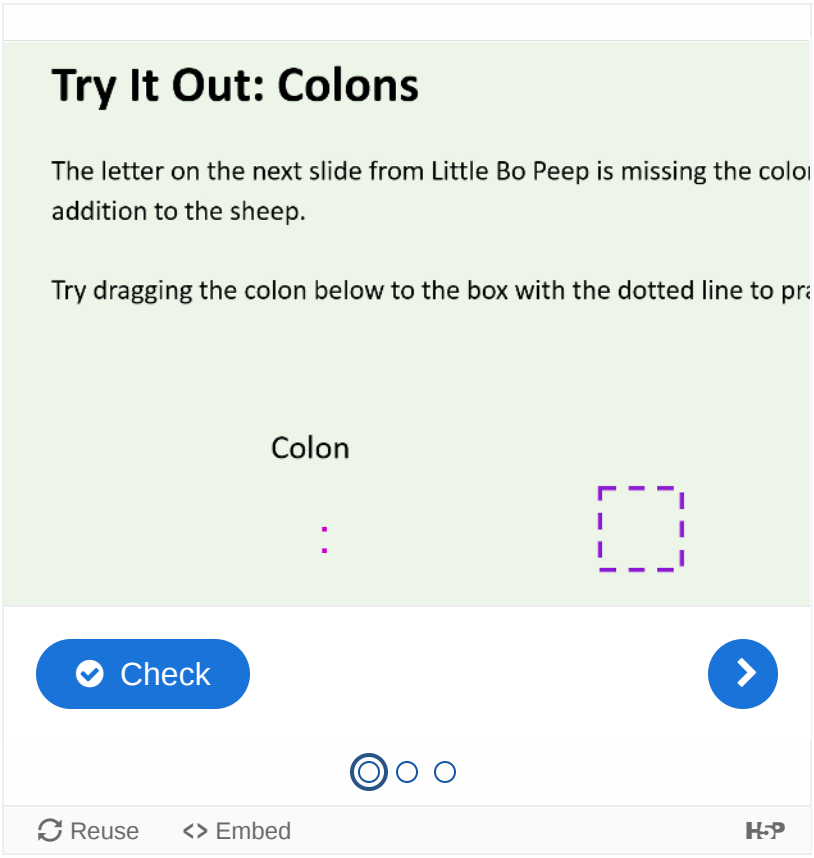
In most cases, essentially, a colon signals “anticipation”—the reader knows that what follows the colon will define, illustrate, or explain what preceded it. This is certainly the case in the colon’s first three uses, as described below:

- Use a colon to separate two independent clauses (complete thoughts) when you want to emphasize the second independent clause.
  - Road construction in New York City might pose a problem if there is a zombie attack: It is best to know which streets are closed, as you do not want to end up lost during a dire situation.
- Use a colon to separate an independent clause from a list that follows the independent clause.
  - I have collected a wide variety of important items in case there is a zombie attack: canned food, bottled water, and wood for boarding my windows.

TIP! You shouldn’t use a colon when the introductory portion of the sentence is a dependent clause (incomplete thought). The first part of the sentence must be an independent clause or a complete sentence. So the following would NOT work:

I have collected: canned food, bottled water, and wood for boarding my windows.

- Use a colon to separate an independent clause from an appositive (a noun or noun phrase that renames or identifies a noun or noun phrase right next to it) that follows the independent clause.
  - I have the perfect solution to your problems with bullies at work: Chuck Norris.
- You should also use a colon at the end of a formal, business letter greeting.
  - To Whom It May Concern:
- And, of course, you should use a colon to separate the hour from the minutes when writing numerical time.
  - 3:00 a.m.



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11.1.4: Commas

Commas

The Comma: Tricky, Mysterious, and Subjective?

People often think commas are tricky and mysterious, and while they may be tricky if we aren't familiar with the rules, they are not mysterious at all. They are not subjective, and no matter what your third-grade teacher told you, it's probably not a good idea to place a comma wherever you feel the need to take a breath. What happens if you have a stuffy nose from a cold? Your essay might be littered with unnecessary commas.

There are actually some pretty clear-cut rules regarding commas, and while some rules seem to be clearer than others, at least in terms of how much most people understand, there are some basic comma rules that can help you know when and when not to use a comma.

With Coordinating Conjunctions

Use a comma with a coordinating conjunction when combining two independent clauses.

An independent clause is a term for a complete thought or sentence with both a subject and a verb. A coordinating conjunction is a conjunction that combines two equal elements and can combine two complete sentences. We have seven coordinating conjunctions in American English:

- For
- And
- Nor
- But
- Or
- Yet
- So

You may have heard of these referred to as the FANBOYS, which is a great way to help you remember all seven of the coordinating conjunctions.

Coordinating conjunctions can connect all kinds of words and phrases, but when they are used to connect independent clauses, we must place a comma before the coordinating conjunction, as illustrated in the following example:

I am preparing for a zombie invasion, and I am building a strong zombie fort around my home.

TIP! If the coordinating conjunction does not connect two independent clauses, you would not need a comma before the coordinating conjunction, as illustrated in the following example:

- I am preparing for a zombie invasion and am building a strong zombie fort around my home.

In a Series

Use a comma to separate items in a series (three or more things).

You should even place a comma between the last two, although some writing style guidelines now omit this comma. In academic culture, we still use the serial or "Oxford" comma, so even punctuation rules have a rhetorical context. In some situations, you may not use the serial comma, but in academic writing, you should, as illustrated in these examples:

- She stayed up all night watching scary movies and ate popcorn, peanuts, and chocolate.
- She ran into the house, shut the door, and locked all of the locks because she thought a werewolf was behind her.

With Introductory Phrases

Use commas after introductory words or phrases.

Subordinating conjunctions are words that connect, but unlike coordinating conjunctions, which connect equal parts, subordinating conjunctions connect dependent clauses (incomplete thoughts) to independent clauses. When you see a subordinating conjunction at the beginning of a sentence, this signals an introductory phrase, and you know a comma is coming at the end of that subordinate phrase, as illustrated in these examples:

Because his favorite team lost the Super Bowl, he would not speak to anyone about the game for two years.

Although they have stored a lot of food in their basement, I am not sure if they have enough for a zombie apocalypse.

Some of the most common subordinating conjunctions include the following:

- Because
- Although
- After
- While
- Since

TIP! When these same phrases appear at the end of a sentence, they are not set off by commas, except in cases of strong contrast—for instance, in the case of the word although.

He would not speak to anyone about the game for two years because his favorite team lost the Super Bowl.

I am not sure if they have enough for a zombie apocalypse, although they have stored a lot of food in their basement.

You should also place a comma after introductory words, as illustrated in this example:

- However, video games make great presents for a teenager.

Essential & Nonessential Information

Use commas in the middle of a sentence to set off words or phrases that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

- The New York Yankees, who happen to be my favorite team, have won more World Series than any other team in baseball.
- The Boston Red Sox, however, have won the World Series only seven times.

This rule can be a little tricky because of some misinformation we may have received at some point in elementary school. Were you ever taught that the trick to determining whether or not you need commas around information in the middle of a sentence was to pull out that information and see if the sentence was still complete? If the sentence was still complete, then you would know you needed a comma around that extra information.

Well, that doesn't always work so well.

The best tip is to think about how meaning would be affected if you pulled out the word or phrase. If the meaning is not really affected, the word or phrase is not essential and should be placed inside a set of commas.

Conversely, it's important to remember that essential words or phrases should not be set off with commas.

- Her copy of Skyrim that I borrowed last week was the best game I have ever played and probably the best video game in the history of the world.

With Adjectives

Use a comma to separate coordinate adjectives describing the same noun.

An adjective is a word that describes a noun, and when we have two coordinate or "equal" adjectives describing the same noun, we need to place a comma between those adjectives, as illustrated in this example:

- It was a stressful, sleepless night because I stayed up too late playing Dead Space.

If the adjectives aren't coordinate, or "equal," you should not separate them with a comma, as illustrated in this example:

- Everyone knows the white frame house on Third Street is haunted.

A good trick to help you determine whether or not adjectives are coordinate is to try reading the sentence with the adjectives in reverse order or to add the word and between them. If the sentence would still make sense to you, the adjectives are coordinate, and you would need to separate them with a comma if they are describing a single noun.

Shifts at the End

Use a comma to separate coordinate elements at the end of a sentence or to indicate a distinct shift at the end of a sentence.

This comma rule is pretty straightforward. If you have a distinct shift at the end in content or a shift at the end for emphasis, you should set off that shift at the end with a comma.

- You want me to fight Chuck Norris for you? I am brave, not crazy.
- You are going to stand in line for the new Halo 4, aren't you?

With Quotes

Use a comma between the main discourse and a quote.

Whether you are writing dialog or setting up a quote from a source in your research essay, you should use a comma to separate the main discourse from your quote.

- As Bilbo Baggins said, "I like half of you half as well as I should like, and like less than half of you half as well as you deserve!"
- My favorite line in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is when the witches say, "Double, double, toil and trouble; fire, burn; and cauldron, bubble."

Places & Dates

Use commas to set apart geographical names and to separate items in dates, except for between the month and the day.

- When I heard zombies had been located in New York, New York, I knew it was time to move to Los Angeles, California.
- It is a good thing that letter made it to 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey, England.
- I know the Mayan calendar indicates the end of the world on December 21, 2012, but I am going to stick with Nostradamus because he gave us until 3797.

Comma Abuse

Finally, don't abuse the poor comma. It hasn't done anything to you. Well, it may have caused you some stress from time to time, but you should not abuse it. You should *definitely* not use a comma in the following instances:

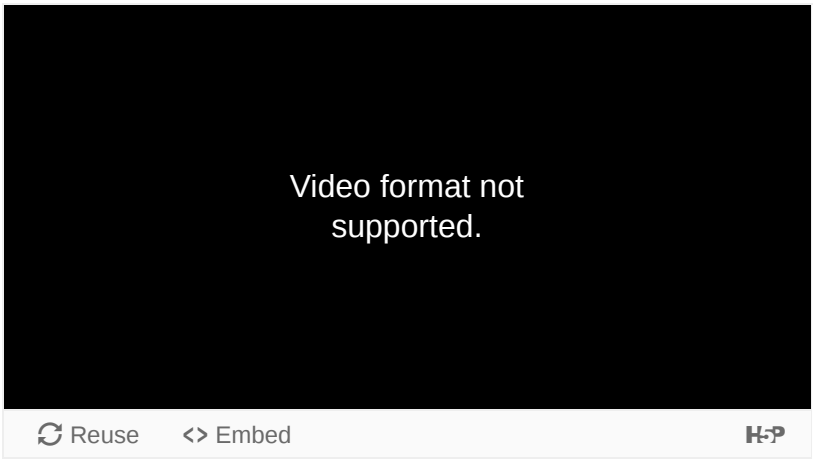
- To separate a subject from a verb.
  - My zombie plan, involves the complete and utter failure of your zombie plan.
- Between two verbs or verb phrases in a compound predicate.
  - Do those vampires really sparkle in the sunlight, and drink only animal blood?
- Between two nouns or noun phrases in a compound subject.
  - Aggressive newbies, and campers are ruining the gaming experiences for me.
- To set off a dependent clauses at the end of a sentence, except in cases of strong contrast.
  - My gaming confidence is at an all-time low, because I got pawned ten times by a second-grader.

Tips from the Professor

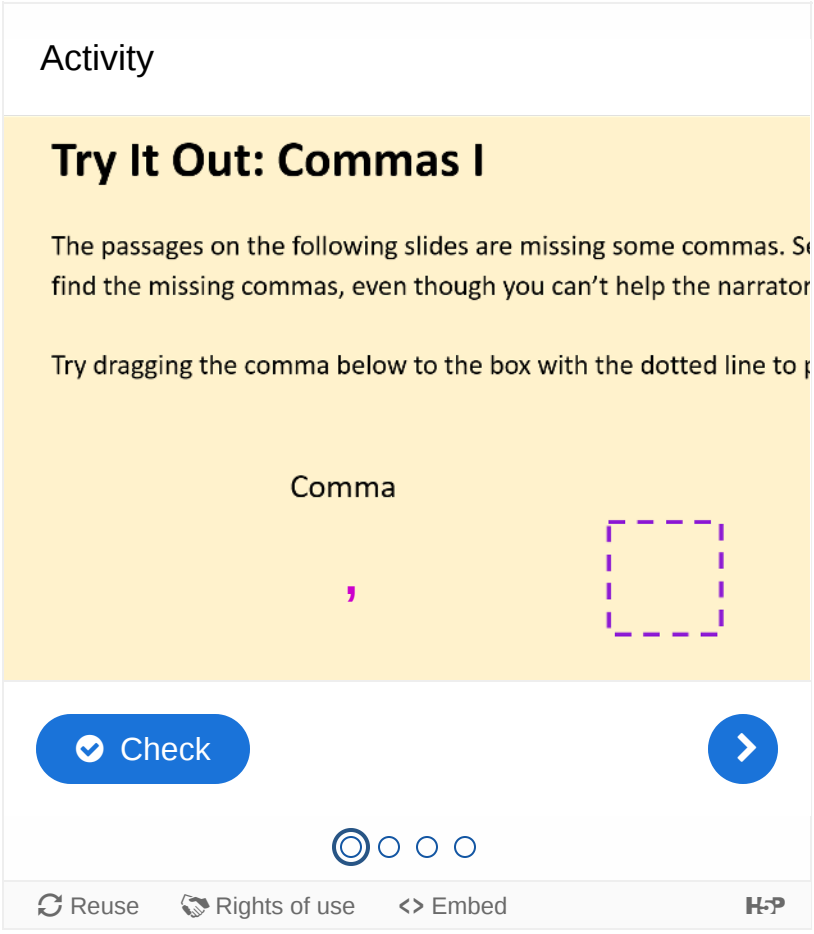
Students often struggle with commas when it comes to using them correctly with the coordinating conjunctions—and, but, or, for, nor, so, and yet.

The important thing to remember is that you have to keep in mind what else is around that conjunction. You can't assume that every time you use and you'll need a comma. Sometimes, you will, and, sometimes, you won't.

In the following interactive video, the Grammar Professor will explain more about why you have to think about what surrounds your coordinating conjunction before you can decide whether or not you need that comma.



Activity



Activity

Try It Out: Commas II

In this second round of comma practice, the passage is missing some commas. See if you can find the missing commas in this passage as you learn all about Egyptian mummies.

Try dragging the comma below to the box with the dotted line to practice.

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11.1.5: Dashes

Dashes

What is that dash for anyway?

The dash is kind of like the superhero of punctuation. Not only does it have a cool, sleek name, it's often referred to as the "super comma." But you can't just go around using dashes because you want super commas. There are some rules you should follow, and you don't want to overuse any one type of punctuation.

The following two rules should help you make good decisions regarding that dashing dash:

- You use dashes to set apart or emphasize the content that is within the dashes or after a dash. The content within the dashes or after the dash gets more emphasis than it would if you just used commas or parentheses.

His ideas regarding an evacuation in case of a zombie attack are certainly controversial—even radical.

I think the reason those books became so popular—so much so that they became a cultural phenomenon—is that the world was ready for a little bit of magic.

- You can also use dashes to set apart an appositive phrase or extra information that contains commas.

The changes that came with the arrival of the eleventh doctor—the screwdriver, the TARDIS, and all of the side characters—certainly surprised many fans.

Of course, while the rules related to using dashes are relatively simple, there seems to be great confusion over how the dash is actually created in word processing programs.

To be sure, the dash is no hyphen. The hyphen is smaller and comes between words like mother-in-law. The dash is longer and is created by placing two hyphens in a row. Then, after you space after the word after the dash, most word processing programs will turn those two little hyphens — into a dash—like so.

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11.1.6: Ellipses

Ellipses

What are those three little dots for?

A lot of people seem to use an ellipsis to show a pause or hint at the future in informal writing. Ellipses appear this way frequently in Facebook messages and emails. Interestingly, although this use of an ellipsis was technically incorrect at one time, it's becoming "more" correct over time with some style manuals suggesting you can use an ellipsis in this manner if you use it sparingly.

Still, in formal writing, it's probably not a good idea to use an ellipsis to show a pause or to create anticipation of some kind. Generally, academic style guides recommend using an ellipsis to show that you have omitted words in quotes. Here is an example of how to use ellipses in a formal, academic writing situation.

Quote:

"Often, a school is your best bet—perhaps not for education but certainly for protection from an undead attack."
— Max Brooks, *The Zombie Survival Guide*

With an ellipsis:

"Often, a school is your best bet . . . for protection from an undead attack."

The key is that you shouldn't change the meaning of the quote. The second quote here isn't nearly so witty, but the basic idea hasn't been changed. When you have long quotes and you need to eliminate some unnecessary information from those quotes, an ellipsis can be very helpful.

Making the Ellipsis

Of course, now that you know when to use an ellipsis you may be wondering how to make one. An ellipsis is three periods or dots, and most style guides call for a space between each dot. So, you would type period, space, period, space, and period. You also need a space before and after the ellipsis. One tip is to make sure your ellipsis does not stretch to the next line. It must be all on one line. If you are ending a sentence with an ellipsis, it may look like you have a four-dot ellipsis, but there is really no such thing. The first dot is your period. Then, you have your ellipsis. In this situation, you will also put a space between each period.

Example:

According to Jones (2012), "*The Walking Dead* series has added to the new popularity of zombies. . . . However, several movies are responsible for the initial interest" (p. 31).

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11.1.7: Exclamation Marks

Exclamation Marks

When should you use an exclamation mark?

Honestly, you won't use a lot of exclamation marks in academic writing. The exclamation mark is kind of the equivalent of yelling, and most academic writing situations don't call for much yelling, though you may feel like yelling about some of your assignments.

However, exclamation marks do serve an important function by adding emphasis to commands or other phrases, and you may find yourself needing the exclamation mark when you write dialog for certain narrative assignments.

You can certainly see the difference between a sentence punctuated with a period and one punctuated with an exclamation mark.

Watch out.
Watch out!

Zombies are coming.
Zombies are coming!

In most cases, you should be careful with exclamation marks and make sure the situation calls for them. They are generally considered pretty informal, and a particularly famous writer had this to say about them:

"Cut out all these exclamation points. An exclamation point is like laughing at your own joke."
— F. Scott Fitzgerald, author of *The Great Gatsby*

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11.1.8: Hyphens

Hyphens

Hyphenating Words

“The basic rule of hyphens . . . is that they’re used to form compound modifiers, that is, to link two or more words that are acting as adjectives or sometimes adverbs.” (Casagrande, 2006, p. 62)

Okay, what? What are compound modifiers?

The rule is actually simpler than it seems. Essentially, when you have two or more words that modify or describe a noun that follows, you should hyphenate those words. But a word of caution: you shouldn’t hyphenate the same words if they come after the noun.

Examples:

I thought we were in a long-term relationship.
Everyone knew that relationship was not long term.

I really need a fuel-efficient car to save money for more video games.
To save money for video games, I bought a car with better fuel efficiency.

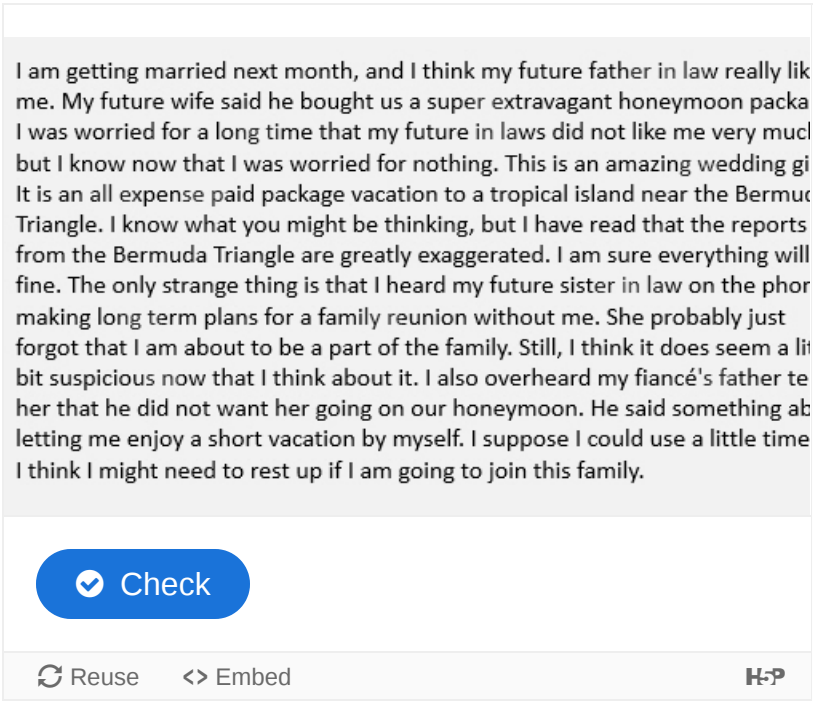
I have a three-year-old son who mimics every word you say.
I have a son who mimics every word you say; he is three years old.

Hyphens also have other uses including acting with prefixes, suffixes, nouns, letters, and numbers, and clarifying the meaning of words. Generally, you will hyphenate words that begin with self, all, ex, and words that begin with a capital letter or number. Here are some examples:

- Ex-husband
- All-inclusive
- Self-help
- The A-team

Of course, we should also hyphenate compound numbers like twenty-five or thirty-seven.

Finally, it’s important to note that hyphen “rules” are more like the Pirate Code in that they are really more like guidelines. Even the “experts” will disagree about whether or not some words or groups of words should be hyphenated. It’s definitely a good idea to double-check with the style manual you are using, such as the APA or MLA manuals, and for tricky words, you can consult a good dictionary.



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11.1.9: Parentheses

Parentheses

Parentheses: More Than Helpful Emoticon Tools

Interestingly, parentheses can do more than make smiley faces :) and sad faces :(like these. Although they are quite handy for these important emoticons, they serve an important function in formal writing, as well.

Parentheses are used to set off information in a sentence that is important but not really a part of the main message. It's important to remember that your sentence should make sense if you eliminate the parentheses and all that is contained between them.

The Headless Horseman (as the old legend goes) eliminated the disruption Ichabod Crane brought to Sleepy Hollow.

You'll probably use parentheses most often in your research papers because both APA and MLA formatting require in-text citations using parentheses. So right after a quote or any other borrowed information, you should include an in-text citation in parentheses, as illustrated in these examples:

APA (Jones, 2011, p.131).
MLA (Jones 131).

TIP: The period comes after the parenthesis in both APA and MLA format. The exception to this rule is with block quotes. When using block quotes, in both APA and MLA format, the period comes before the in-text citation.

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11.1.10: Periods

Periods

Periods: We Go Way Back!

The period seems pretty straightforward. After all, for most of us, this was the first punctuation we learned when we were learning to read. See Jane run. To our first-grader selves, that meant, See Jane run, stop, take a break, keep going. You can do this thing.

Periods are certainly important punctuation because they are what we most often use to separate complete thoughts or independent clauses. Periods are how we end our sentences most of the time.

However, periods do serve another important function in the world of punctuation: You should use a period with abbreviations.

- Dr.
- Mr.
- Mrs.
- Ms.
- a.m.
- p.m.

Then, of course, there is the question about how many spaces should come after a period. If you learned to type on those things called typewriters, you learned to double space after all periods at the ends of sentences. However, this isn't always the case anymore. Generally, we just single space after all periods, though you should consult the style guide you are using. APA style now requires a single space after a period at the end of a sentence, after requiring a double space in the sixth edition.

The lesson here is clear. The "rules" change all the time and are dependent upon your style guide. It's important to stay up to date.

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11.1.11: Question Marks

Question Marks

The Question Mark: It Raises Some Good Questions

Question marks are pretty simple. You should use a question mark at the end of a question like this:

- When did our professor say that essay was due?

However, there is one situation involving question marks that seems to give people a lot of trouble. What about when you have a sentence that is part statement and part question? What do you do then? You have a couple of options, depending upon the situation. You might have a sentence like this:

- The question I have is, how are we going to get out of here?

In this case, the statement before the question isn't complete, so you can simply use a comma to separate the statement from the question.

Of course, the sample sentence is a bit awkward, so it might be preferable to rewrite the sentence. You could change the sentence so the first part, the statement part, is a complete sentence. In this situation, you might have a sentence like the following:

- One question remains: How are we going to get out of here?

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11.1.12: Quotation Marks

Quotation Marks

Don’t Forget the Quotation Marks

Quotation marks are how we tell our readers we are including words that aren't our own. Whether we're using dialog or quote material from our research, quotation marks are important punctuation. The reality is that punctuation marks can really make a difference in whether or not you are breaking the law. After all, if you use someone’s words and don't let your readers know you are using someone else’s words, that constitutes plagiarism, which is most certainly illegal.

So, if you have doubts about this whole quotation thing, the following pages will be extremely helpful. This super-cool video can help as well.

Dialog

Quotation Marks with Dialog

You may not find yourself needing to use dialog very often in academic writing, but you may be asked to write narrative essays in some classes, which often contain dialog.

When you use dialog, it’s important to use quotation marks to set apart the speech from the rest of your text. Otherwise, separating the dialog from the rest of the writing can be very confusing for readers.

- This time, my basketball coach said, “I know you can do it.” It turned out he did not really know what he was talking about.

Quoting Sources

Quotation Marks with Quoted Material

You should use quotation marks any time you use words directly from another source. Sometimes, students think putting a citation or reference at the end “covers it,” but you must use quotation marks to indicate borrowed words.

- “Quotation marks serve primarily to tell the reader the exact words someone used” (Hope, 2010, p. 21).

If you paraphrase a source, this means you have put the information in your own words, and you don’t need to use quotation marks. You should still cite with an in-text citation, but you shouldn’t use quotation marks.

The key to borrowing information from sources is to remember that any words appearing inside quotation marks belong to someone else. Words that do not appear inside quotation marks are assumed to be yours.

Single Quotes

What are those single quotes for?

Now that you know what quotation marks are used for, you may wonder about the single quotation marks—the one that look like ‘this.’

Single quotation marks are used for quotes within quotes, as illustrated in the following example:

The article read, “When the quarterback for the Green Bay Packers was interviewed, he said he was ‘upset’ about the call that affected the game.”

You may even encounter situations where you’ll close single quotation marks and double quotation marks at the same time, leaving you with “something like ‘this.’” Don’t worry if this happens. It is correct. It just means the quote within the quote ended at the same time the main quote ended.

Try It Out: Quotation Marks

The paragraphs on the next few slides share some interesting information about the famous author, Edgar Allan Poe, but the author of the paragraph needs to place quotation marks around titles and quoted material.

After reviewing the passages, drag the quotation marks from the top right, and then place them in the correct places in the paragraph.

Start Activity

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11.1.13: Semicolons

Semicolons

The Semicolon: It's Not a Strong Comma

It's true. The semicolon is used for more things than just winking in text. ;)

One of the main uses of a semicolon is to separate two independent clauses.

The semicolon isn't like a comma; it's really more like a period. Using a semicolon like a comma can definitely create some trouble.

First, let's take a step back and explain the difference between an independent clause and a dependent clause. An independent clause expresses a complete thought. An independent clause is usually called a sentence. Conversely, a dependent clause is a group of words that may contain a subject and verb but does not express a complete thought.

Examples:

Independent clause:
I ran quickly to escape the zombie I encountered on Main Street.

Dependent clause:
Although I ran quickly to escape the zombie I encountered on Main Street,

Can you see the difference?

The first example is a complete sentence, and the second example isn't. Of course, we also know the first one has a happy ending, and we aren't so sure about the second one.

So now that you understand what an independent clause is and that a semicolon connects two independent clauses, we can begin to look at how the semicolon can be used.

Joining Clauses

Semicolons to Join Clauses

You should use a semicolon when you're joining two independent clauses without a connecting word. The semicolon functions, structurally, just like a period. The difference is that the semicolon between the two independent clauses shows they are connected, as illustrated in the following examples:

If you want me to vote for you, you are going to need to tell me what I want to hear; if you are lying, I guess I will worry about that later.

I am so tired of spending so much money on canned food for my zombie apocalypse hoard; I am pretty sure the grocery store clerks are laughing at me behind my back.

In Lists

Using Semicolons in Lists

So right after telling you that semicolons shouldn't be used like commas, we should discuss one situation where the semicolon does function more like a comma. However, this is a very particular situation, so you'll want to pay close attention.

You should use semicolons when you are separating items in a list that contain commas. Here is an example:

At the Comicon conference, I met Jeanne, from Dallas, Texas; James, from Bend, Oregon; and Stacey, from Bangor, Maine.

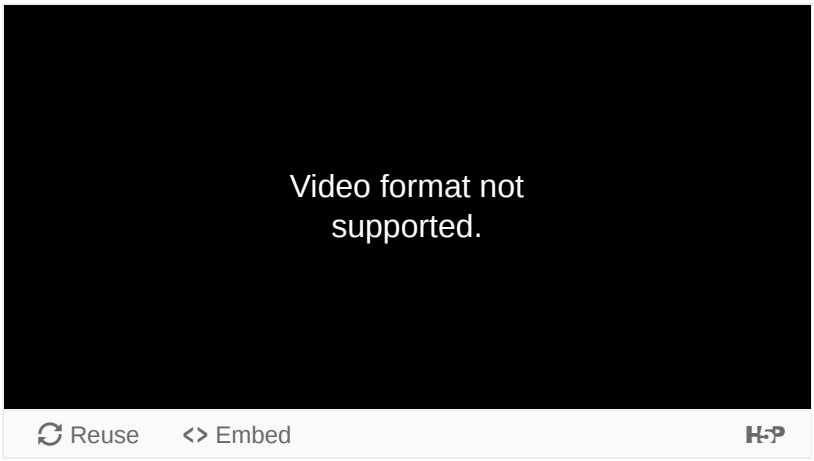
Because the items in the series contain commas themselves, it would be confusing to add more commas to the situation. In this particular instance, the semicolon separates the items in a series.

Tips from the Professor

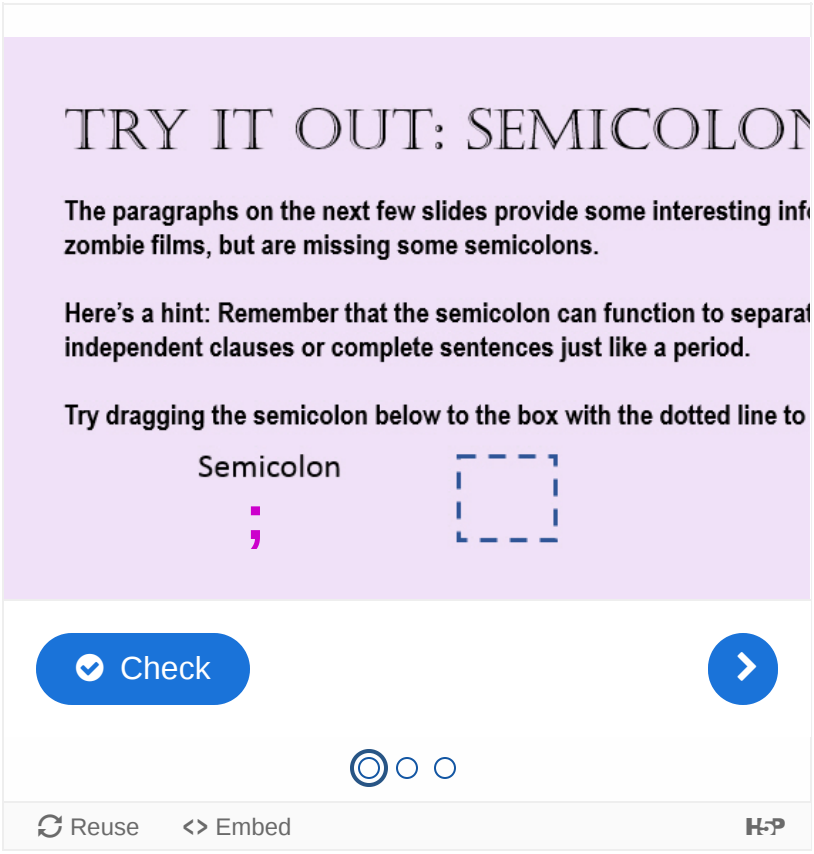
Semicolons can feel a little confusing because sometimes they're used to separate items in a series, as mentioned on the previous page, but they are really nothing like a comma. In terms of sentence structure, they can separate independent clauses, just like a period.

If you have the habit of using a semicolon like a comma, it's important to work to break that habit. When you edit your writing, it's a good idea to circle all of the semicolons you have used. Then, ask yourself why each semicolon is there. If you're using it like a strong comma, you'll need to revise.

The following video from the Grammar Professor can help you if you continue to struggle with semicolons.



Try It Out



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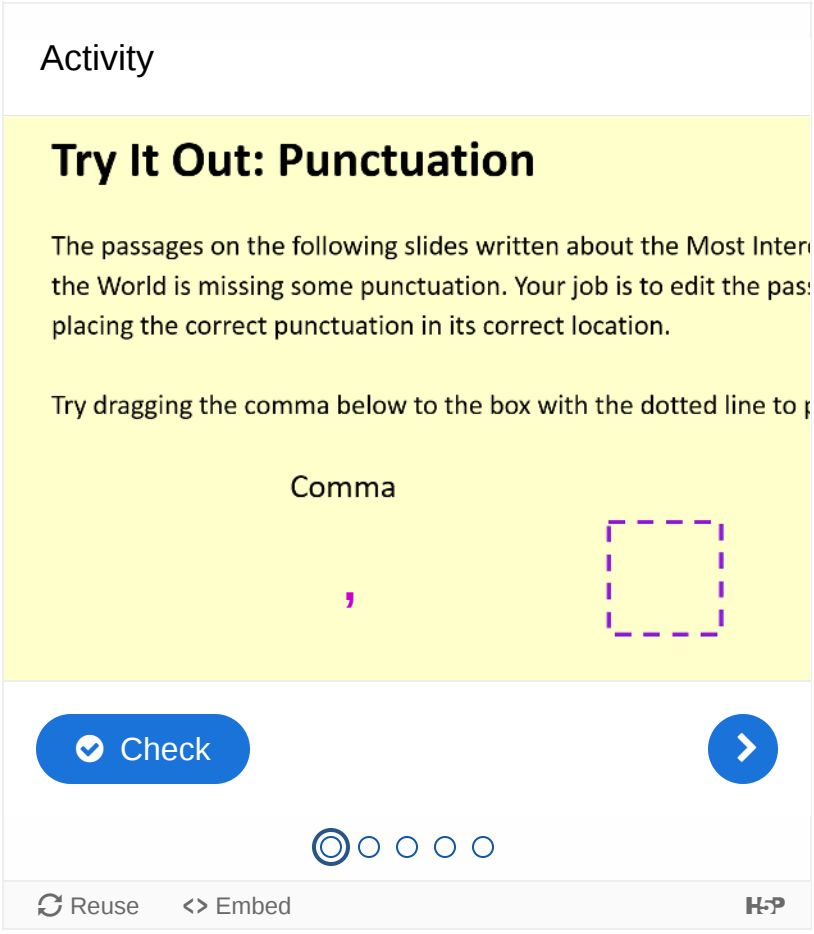
11.1.14: Try It Out

Try It Out



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11.1.15: Putting It All Together

Putting It All Together

You have certainly had a lot to take in as you considered each type of punctuation. To help you review, watch and listen to the presentation below, which provides a basic overview of what you have learned about punctuation.

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11.1.16: Time to Write

Time to Write

Now that you have a stronger understanding of the punctuation rules, it’s time to think about how these rules might apply to your own writing. One key strategy is to think about the areas in which you struggle. If you don’t have problems with apostrophes, then you shouldn’t worry too much about apostrophes.

However, it’s important to keep punctuation in general in mind when you edit. It’s important to edit your writing in several passes; you can’t catch every issue in one sweeping edit. So, with that in mind, it’s a good idea to devote one edit to simply looking for punctuation issues. It’s most helpful to review the rules right before you edit, especially the rules for the types of punctuation you have had struggles with, perhaps commas or semicolons.

It’s your turn now, and knowing more about the rules of punctuation is a helpful part of a good editing process!

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SECTION OVERVIEW

11.2: Parts of Speech

11.2.1: Nouns

11.2.2: Pronouns

11.2.3: Verbs

11.2.4: Adjectives

11.2.5: Adverbs

11.2.6: Propositions

11.2.7: Articles

11.2.8: Conjunctions

11.2.9: Interjections

11.2.10: Try It Out

11.2.11: Putting It All Together

11.2.12: Time to Write

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11.2.1: Nouns

Nouns

A noun is a person, place, object, idea, or event. “The word *noun*, in fact, comes from *nomen*, the Latin word for *name*” (Kolln, 1994, p. 276). Nouns are the first words you learned as a child, and you probably have a really strong sense of what a noun is. After all, how could we possibly talk about anything if we’re unable to give it a name?

So you may be wondering why in the world we have to complicate something as simple as nouns by discussing so many different types of nouns. The answer is that it’s important to learn about the different types of nouns as you work to ensure proper structures and agreements in your sentences.

Proper Nouns

A proper noun refers to a specific person, place, organization, etc. Proper nouns are capitalized because they are specific nouns.

Some examples of proper nouns are Steven, Apple (the company), New York, and the Seattle Seahawks.

Common Nouns

A common noun refers to a general group or class of people, places, objects, etc. One way to identify a common noun is called the “the” test. If you can use the noun with the article the (or another article like a or an) in front of it, the word is likely a common noun.

Some examples are the *game*, the *movie*, and the *ghost*.

Of course, it’s important to remember that the “the” test does not work all the time. It’s just a good guideline.

Some exceptions to the “the” test would be with proper nouns (discussed on the previous page) like the Dallas Cowboys and the Boston Red Sox. Even though they would pass the “the” test, they are proper nouns, not common nouns.

Collective Nouns

Nouns can get a little tricky when it comes to a discussion of collective nouns. Collective nouns are nouns such as family, team, and majority. The tricky part comes when we have to make a decision about whether these nouns are singular or plural because we have to choose verbs that will agree with these nouns.

And, now, here’s the really tricky part: There are no hard and fast rules. The verb you choose to agree with the collective noun actually depends upon how you want your readers to perceive the noun. Is it a single unit or a group of individuals? Even then, it depends upon context. Take the collective noun family, for example.

- The family have all gone their separate ways since Grandma died.

Here, because each member went his or her separate way, you would see the collective noun family as a group of individuals; therefore, you would use a plural verb instead of a singular verb.

But let’s look at another example.

- The whole family is coming to my house for Thanksgiving this year. I had better learn to cook a turkey.

Here, the family is seen as a single unit, so you would need a singular verb to agree with the collective noun.

In her book, *Rhetorical Grammar*, Martha Kolln (1991) says “[collective nouns] can be treated as either singular or plural, depending on context and meaning” (p. 47). So, it really does depend on the situation.

You may be wondering how this information is helpful. The key is to think about how you might perceive the collective noun and then, of course, to consider how it’s used in the sentence.

And, after all, there are only about 200 collective nouns in the English language, so you really only have to worry about 200 of these. Okay, that’s a lot. But this is a great example of how, very often, there are no hard and fast rules for grammar.

Verbal Nouns

A verbal noun is a type of noun that is derived from a verb. It looks like a verb but actually functions in a sentence like a noun. Here are some examples:

- Running from zombies is hard work.
- Jogging is a good exercise that will help you prepare, but you have to do it every day.
- We had a meeting to compare our zombie action plans.

Verbal nouns and something called gerunds (a form of a verb or verb phrase that functions as a noun phrase and subject in a sentence) are very similar. In fact, the first two examples above are examples of verbal nouns that are also gerunds. But, a verbal noun can be more than a gerund. In the last example, the word "meeting" is functioning like a noun but isn't a noun phrase that's the subject of a sentence.

It can certainly get a little confusing, and even the grammar experts disagree sometimes about the differences between verbal nouns and gerunds.

The key thing for you to remember is that, when we are talking about nouns, verbs can sometimes function in your sentences like nouns.

Compound Nouns

A compound noun is a noun made up of two or more words. Sometimes, compound nouns are hyphenated, but there are plenty of examples of compound nouns that are not hyphenated. There are also compound nouns that are written as one word. Here are some examples:

- Mother-in-law
- Waste-paper basket
- Full moon
- Blackboard

Some compound nouns that used to be hyphenated are no longer hyphenated, and some compound nouns that used to be two words became one word. The "rules" change based upon common usage.

Paper-clip is now just paperclip.

And healthcare is now generally considered just one word, but some people still say it should be two words, health care.

"Rules" of correctness change constantly, and rules related to compound nouns change rather quickly. If you're in doubt about how to write a compound noun, be sure to check a good online dictionary.

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11.2.2: Pronouns

Pronouns

Pronouns are actually just another type of noun, but because they're such an important noun type and so commonly used, they're usually classified as a separate part of speech. A pronoun is a noun that takes the place of a noun or groups of nouns, and because pronouns are "standing in" for nouns, you have to be sure that the pronoun you choose to "stand in" agrees in number, person, and gender.

The menu on the left will take you to the different pronoun types, and there are quite a few: personal, definite, indefinite, singular, plural, possessive, relative, demonstrative, reflexive, subjective, and objective. That's a long list, right?

The pronouns discussed in the following pages will probably not cause any trouble for native speakers, but you may find it interesting to realize how complicated this all is and, yet, how easily most of us can usually use pronouns without a problem. Still, issues with pronoun agreement (making the pronouns agree with the nouns they define) and pronoun reference (making sure it is clear what noun a pronoun is replacing) often appear in the writing of beginning writers. If you have ever had a pronoun issue marked on one of your essays, you are in the right place!

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns are pronouns that take the place of common and proper nouns and refer to people and things. Essentially, they "stand in" for people and things when you want to make sure you are not repeating yourself by having to rename people and things all the time. Let's look at an example.

My brother is staying up late to watch a "Walking Dead" marathon. He is going to have nightmares!

In this example, the author doesn't have to repeat my brother, thanks to the personal pronoun he.

Personal pronouns can be singular and plural, and there are first, second, and third-person personal pronouns.

Personal (Definite) Pronouns

	Singular	Plural
First Person	I, me	we, us
Second Person	you	you
Third Person	she, her, he, him, it	they, them

Definite & Indefinite Pronouns

What is the difference between definite and indefinite pronouns? A definite pronoun would be a pronoun that refers to something specific, so a personal pronoun would also be a definite pronoun. (Refer back to the Personal Pronouns page to see examples.)

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to anything specific, so words like someone and everybody are indefinite pronouns. Indefinite pronouns can also be singular or plural.

While any pronoun that refers to a specific person or thing would be a definite pronoun, it can be helpful to refer to a list of indefinite pronouns if you need to use pronouns that refer to people or things in general and do not refer to anyone or anything specific. The list below can help.

Indefinite Pronouns

Singular	anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, somebody, someone, something
Plural	both, few, many, several
Singular or Plural	all, any, most, none, some

Singular & Plural Pronouns

Singular pronouns are simply pronouns that refer to singular nouns. But it can get a little tricky when you think about the fact that singular pronouns can be personal pronouns, which, as you have learned, refer to a person or thing. They will also be definite or indefinite, which means they can refer to someone or something specific (definite) or not (indefinite).

So words like "he" and "she" are singular, personal, definite pronouns, and words like "anybody" and "anyone" are singular, indefinite pronouns.

Plural pronouns are simply pronouns that refer to plural nouns. But, like singular pronouns, plural pronouns can also be personal and definite or indefinite, and they refer to plural nouns or groups of nouns.

For example, words like "they" and "we" are plural, personal, definite pronouns, and words like "many" and "both" are plural, indefinite pronouns.

TIP! Don't worry if you feel a little confused about the fact that singular and plural pronouns can also be personal pronouns. They are definite or indefinite as well. However, most likely, you won't find yourself in situations where you have to label pronoun types. What you do need to know is that, when you choose a singular or plural pronoun, you have to make sure it agrees with the noun you're replacing. So, if you're replacing a singular noun, be sure to use a singular pronoun.

Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns are pronouns that show ownership. Some possessive pronouns can be used before nouns and function as adjectives (words that describe nouns). Examples would be pronouns like "my, her", or "his" because you would say things like "*my* books, *her* computer", and "*his* zombie plan".

Other possessive pronouns stand alone. These are pronouns like "mine, yours, hers", and "his". An example would be "That book is *hers"*.

Relative & Demonstrative Pronouns

Relative pronouns relate subordinate clauses (clauses that cannot stand alone) to the rest of a sentence. Words like "that, which, who", and "whom" are examples of relative pronouns.

Demonstrative pronouns stand in for a thing or things, and we choose these words based on how close these things are to us. For things that are nearby, we use the pronouns "this" and "these". For things that are far away, we use the pronouns "that" and "those".

Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns end in self or selves, and they're used when a pronoun is both the subject and the object of a sentence.

- She is going to can all of those beans for her zombie storage room herself.
- I am going to treat myself to a little vacation from all of this worry about a zombie apocalypse and spend the day playing Halo on my Xbox.

Reflexive pronouns can also be used to show emphasis in a sentence, as illustrated in this example:

- I myself had to go through all of those web pages to find the one that would be the most helpful for our escape plan.

Subjective & Objective Pronouns

Subjective and objective pronouns are simply pronouns that occur in either the subject or the object of the sentence. Subjective pronouns tell us who or what the sentence is about. Objective pronouns receive the action in the sentence.

There are some pronouns that are always subjective and others that are always objective.

	Singular	Plural
Subjective	I, you, he, she, it	we, you, they
Objective	me, you, her, him, it	us, you, them

Sometimes, determining which pronoun we should use in a sentence can be a little confusing, especially when it comes to "I" and "me". You might want to write:

- My mother bought my brother and I new clothes for the first day of school, even though we insisted we did not want to go.

The pronoun I in this sentence is actually incorrect because it appears in the object of the sentence. The sentence should read something like this:

- My mother bought my brother and me new clothes for the first day of school, even though we insisted we did not want to go.

The trick is to take out the other person in the sentence to see if you would use I or me. For example:

Incorrect: “My mother bought I new clothes for school.”

Correct: “My mother bought me new clothes for school.”

Pronoun Agreement & Reference

Issues with pronoun agreement and pronoun references are common struggles for many beginning writers, but these problems are easy to correct once you realize the issue and just pay close attention to the pronouns you’re using in your writing.

Pronoun Agreement Errors

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun you are using to “stand in” for a noun does not agree with that noun in number, place, or gender.

- Clara needs to pick up her book.

Using the singular pronoun her does agree with Clara. It does not feel natural for a native speaker to say the following:

- Clara needs to pick up their book.

In the above sentence, "Clara" is the noun and "her" is the pronoun that agrees with Clara.

A common pronoun agreement error occurs when a writer uses a singular noun like "student" to represent students in general. Then, later, the writer may use "they" as a pronoun to replace "student" because the writer means students in general. This often occurs when people try to avoid that structure and use cumbersome word choices such as he/she, he or she, or (wo)men as there is no gender-neutral singular pronoun in the English language. Using these variations is not preferred, and rewriting the sentence is a better option.

How to rewrite the sentence will depend on which style guide you are using. Both the MLA 8th edition and the APA 7th edition support using the singular they. On the other hand, The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) 17th edition does not support using the singular they in formal writing unless the person being discussed prefers they. CMOS recommends rewriting the sentence so that the noun and pronoun both agree.

For example, you may see something like this:

- If a student really thinks about how much they are paying for college, they are likely to be more focused in class.

According to the most recent MLA and APA style guidelines, this is correct. However, according to CMOS, the sentence should be rewritten.

You could rewrite it like this:

- If students really think about how much they are likely to be more focused in class.

Here is another example.

- When a chef adds a recipe to his or her Facebook page, he or she will often get many likes seemingly instantaneously.

Rewritten with the singular they:

- When a chef adds a recipe to their Facebook page, they will often get many likes seemingly instantaneously.

Rewritten with a plural subject and plural pronoun:

- When chefs add a recipe to their individual Facebook page, they will often get many likes seemingly instantaneously.

Rewritten without pronouns:

- When a chef adds a recipe to Facebook, likes appear seemingly instantaneously.

When in doubt, it is always safe to choose a plural subject so that the pronoun "they" flows more smoothly (and will be correct in number according to all style guides).

Pronoun Reference Errors

Pronoun reference errors can also be problems for beginning writers because it's so easy to get in a hurry when you write and forget that you need to think about how clear your writing will be for your audience.

A common pronoun reference error occurs when students write about several different people or things and then use a pronoun later like "she" or "it", but the audience has no idea what "she" or "it" refers to.

Here is a simple example to give you an idea about what a pronoun reference error looks like:

- My mother and my aunt told me I should consider going to college, and she was right.

Here, the audience wouldn't be sure which person the writer is referring to. Is it the mother or the aunt?

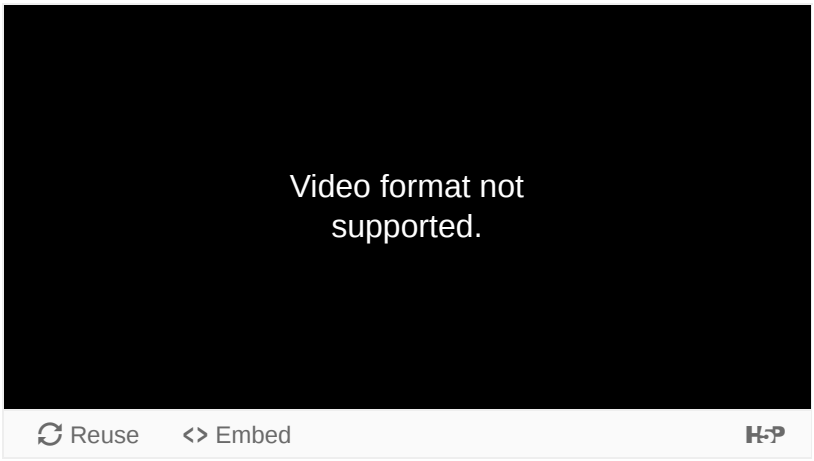
You want to be careful with your writing and make sure you're clear and correct with your pronouns. Most of the time, slowing yourself down and working on some careful editing will reveal problems like these which can be easily corrected.

Tips from the Professor

Most beginning writers have a pretty good sense of correct pronoun usage, but a good editing strategy will help you make sure you have not missed any issues with pronoun agreement or pronoun reference.

One strategy is to edit your writing one time, just looking at pronouns, in addition to other editing passes. If you have had trouble with pronouns in the past, you should circle all of your pronouns and ask yourself questions about their purpose and what they refer to.

In this video, the Grammar Professor will review common issues writers have with pronouns.



NOTE: Because the use of the singular they is new, you may find some people who disagree, but most academics now agree that the singular they is correct. Please always refer to your style guide, as some style guides still recommend not using the singular they.

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11.2.3: Verbs

Verbs

Verbs are the parts of speech that show action or indicate a state of being. We put them with nouns, and we create complete sentences. Like nouns, verbs are foundational in our vocabulary, and we learned verbs as children shortly after we learned nouns. The following pages will help you learn more about verbs, as there really is a lot to consider when it comes to verbs, such as making our subjects and verbs agree, using active versus passive voice, and keeping our verbs in the same tenses.

We'll explain the types of verbs first, to give you context and help you establish some "verb vocabulary," but most writers will want to pay close attention to issues of tense, subject-verb agreement, and active versus passive voice in the pages that follow.

Auxiliary Verbs

Auxiliary verbs are sometimes called the helping verbs because they work with the main verb in a sentence and "help it out". Together, the auxiliary verb and the main verb form a unit. Here are some examples of sentences containing auxiliary verbs:

- Steven is leaving and taking his football with him. How are we going to play now?
- Her favorite team has finished at the top of the conference, so she is going to buy a team jersey. I hope she buys me one, too.

Common Auxiliary Verbs

- am
- are
- be
- can
- could
- did
- do
- does
- had
- have
- is
- was
- were
- will
- would

Linking Verbs

Linking verbs join or "link" the subject of a sentence with the rest of the sentence. They make a statement by linking things, as opposed to showing any kind of action.

Common linking verbs are any of the to be verbs: am, is, are, was, were, be, been, and being. However, become and seem are also common, and other verbs have the potential to be linking verbs. It really depends upon the sentence. Here is an example of a common linking verb used in a sentence:

- My environmental biology class is interesting because our teacher thinks Bigfoot might exist.

Here are some examples of how other verbs can become linking verbs:

- That house looks haunted.
- Those old shoes smell funny.

Because linking verbs and auxiliary verbs are often the same words, you may wonder how you can tell the difference between a linking verb and an auxiliary verb. The key is that linking verbs join the subject and the predicate of a sentence, and in some ways, allow the predicate to rename the subject; auxiliary verbs will be used with other verbs.

Action Verbs

Action verbs are the verbs you can probably identify as verbs quickly and easily. These are the words that show action, words like jump, run, and eat.

There are two main classes of action verbs: transitive and intransitive, and there aren't separate lists for each class. Action verbs can be both transitive and intransitive because it all depends on the structure of the sentence.

A transitive verb expresses action toward a person or thing named in the sentence. An intransitive verb expresses action without making any reference to an object.

Transitive:

The college freshman ate Ramen noodles.

Intransitive:

The college freshman complained loudly.

Transitive:

Sophia speaks French.

Intransitive:

She speaks fluently.

Tenses

Verbs can be in the present tense, present progressive tense, past tense, past progressive, present perfect, or past perfect. According to Martha Kolln, author of *Rhetorical Grammar*, there are two grammatical features of verbs that are especially useful: tense and agency, which will be discussed later in the pages on passive voice.

It's important to understand tense because you want to be consistent with your verb tenses in your writing. It's a common mistake to shift tenses without realizing it. This discussion of tenses can increase your "tense awareness," which will lead to fewer errors.

Let's take the verb to eat as an example and see how it looks in the different tenses with the subject I.

Tense	Example
present tense (present point in time)	I eat dinner.
present progressive (present action of limited duration)	I am eating dinner.
past tense (specific point in the past)	I ate dinner yesterday.
past progressive (past action of limited duration)	I was eating.
present perfect (completed action from a point in the past ending at or near present)	I have eaten dinner.
past perfect (past action completed before another action also in the past)	I had just eaten dinner when the phone rang.

When it comes to verb tenses, it's important to be consistent and to be aware of any shifts. If you shift, there needs to be a reason for the shift. Also, APA will often require past tense in your essays, while MLA requires present tense, even if the words have been written in the past. For example, to set up a quote in APA, you might write something like this:

- Smith (2009) wrote, "This verb stuff is really confusing" (p. 10).

In MLA, you would set up the same quote with a present tense verb, like this:

- Smith writes, "This verb stuff is really confusing" (10).

For a more in-depth explanation of APA recommendations for verb tense usage in literature reviews and research papers, go to: Verb Tense Shift.

Subject-Verb Agreement

"The basic rule of sentence agreement is simple: A subject must agree with its verb in number. Number means singular or plural." (Rozakis, 2003, p. 62) The subject may be either singular or plural, and the verb selection should match the subject. The task sounds simple, but it's not always easy to make the subject and verb match without some thought. Subject-verb agreement errors are common errors many beginning writers make, and they are highly-stigmatized errors, which means people will judge you for them.

Here are some tips to help you avoid subject-verb agreement errors.

- When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by and, use a plural verb.
  - Suzy and her friend are missing the best movie ever!
- When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by or, use a singular verb.
  - The pen or the pencil is in the drawer, my purse, my book bag, or perhaps, my pencil pouch.
- Do not be confused by a phrase that comes between your subject and your verb.
  - Russell Wilson, as well as the rest of the Seattle Seahawks, is ready for the game against the Green Bay Packers.
- Collective nouns can be tricky. Sometimes, they take a singular verb, and sometimes they take a plural verb. It depends upon how they are being used. Be sure to refer to the Collective Nouns page for more information and examples.
- Fractions can be especially tricky, but the rule is that fractions should be treated as singular or plural, depending upon the noun they are referring to.
  - Two-thirds of the zombies in "The Walking Dead" move slowly. The rest can apparently sprint.
  - Two-thirds of your cake was eaten before you got home.

Active Versus Passive Verbs

As mentioned earlier, grammarian Martha Kolln mentions agency as one of the most important aspects of verb you should know about. Agency involves understanding the relationship between the subject and the verb in a sentence and whether or not the subject is the agent in the sentence.

Take a moment to read the following two sentences.

- Amy grabbed the zombie survival guide.
- The zombie survival guide was grabbed by Amy.

Can you see how these sentences are different?

In the first sentence, the verb grabbed is active because its subject, Amy is the doer or agent. Amy did the grabbing.

In the second sentence, was grabbed is passive because it describes an action done to its subject, guide. The doer of the action, Amy, is now the object of the preposition by.

We want to use active verbs whenever possible as they allow us to express ourselves clearly, succinctly, and strongly. Active verbs imply that we're confident with what we're saying; we believe in our words. Looking back at the two sentences, we can see that the first one uses fewer words and makes no mistake as to who did the action. The latter sentence is wordy and does not directly address Amy.

TIP! A little strategy you can use to test to see if you're using passive voice is to see if you can add by zombies after the verb. If you can, then you likely have passive voice and may want to restructure your sentence. In the example above, you could certainly say, was grabbed by zombies, so you know this is passive voice.

Purposeful Passive Voice

There are occasions when we might want to use passive verbs, such as when we don't want to mention the doer, the result of the action is more important than the doer, or the doer is unknown. Let's take the following scenario and apply it to all three reasons for using a passive verb.

Tom and Mark, two brothers, are preparing their home for the zombie apocalypse. Tom is throwing canned goods across the room to Mark, who is stacking them on a shelf. They continue to throw canned goods across the room, despite knowing that it's against their mother's wishes. Tom throws a can of creamy corn to Mark and accidentally hits a vase. The vase breaks into pieces. Their mother asks what happened.

The responses could go as follows:

- Tom threw the creamy corn and broke the vase.
- The vase was broken when the creamy corn was thrown at it.

The first sentence uses the active verbs "threw" and "broke". It simply tells what happened and squarely blames Tom. The second sentence uses the passive verbs "was broken" and "was thrown". It doesn't mention who threw the can of corn, keeping the doer unknown. Also, it might be reasonable to believe that Tom thinks letting his mother know that the vase is broken is more important than identifying who broke the vase.

Of course, in the grand scheme of things, what is a vase in the face of a zombie apocalypse, but you get the idea!

TIP! There are some situations when passive voice can be useful, so it's not the case that passive voice is "wrong." It's just that, in most college-level essays, your professors will want you to use active voice because it makes for lively, more engaging writing. A good way to spot passive voice is to look for to be verbs. You will want to limit those as well.

Try It Out

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11.2.4: Adjectives

Adjectives

An adjective modifies (describes or distinguishes) nouns and pronouns. In other words, adjectives change nouns or pronouns in some way. So "movie" is a noun, and a scary movie has been changed by the adjective "scary".

It's important to remember, too, adjectives, as in the case of a *scary* movie, give you a way to inject your point of view into your writing. You might also describe a *loveable* book, a *beautiful* dress, or an *ominous* sky. There's a certain amount of subjectivity, of course, in all of these words, so you'll want to work to keep your audience in mind when choosing your adjectives and do your best to make sure your adjectives (or descriptors) are specific, concrete, and will make sense to both you and your audience.

Order of Adjectives

Adjectives need to be placed in a particular order. What information do you post first? If you're a native English speaker, you can probably figure out the order without any thought. That's because you understand English grammar—even if it's only because you know what "sounds" right. And, if you're a non-native English speaker, you've probably been schooled in the order.

Below, you'll find a table illustrating the royal order of adjectives. Again, native English speakers follow the order—but we don't always know WHY. Think about it. Why would we automatically write four gorgeous, long-stemmed, red, silk roses rather than four silk, long-stemmed, gorgeous, red roses? What drives the order in our description? The first example leads us down a logical path; the second example doesn't let us know which details are most important.

The Royal Order of Adjectives

Determiner	Observation	Physical Description				Origin	Material	Qualifier
		Size	Shape	Age	Color			
a	beautiful			old		Italian		touring
an	expensive			antique			silver	
four	gorgeous		stemmed		red		silk	
her			short		black			
our		big		old		English		
those			square				wooden	hat
that	dilapidated	little						hunting
several		giant		young		American		basketball
some	delicious					Chinese		

Adapted from Adjectives. (n.d.) Capital Community College Foundation. Retrieved from grammar.ccc.commnet.edu.

There are some rules, though. Here is the specific order for English language adjectives—intensifier, quality, size, age, color. Look at the two sentences again.

"Four gorgeous" provides the intensifier and quality; "long-stemmed" provides the size; "red" provides the color; and "silk" provides an additional detail. Now look at the order of the adjectives in one of your own sentences and see if it makes sense to you.

Types of Adjectives

Comparatives and superlatives are types of adjectives, but one (comparatives) provides a relative distinction while the other (superlatives) signifies the most extreme.

Comparative adjectives often end in -er, and superlative adjectives often end in -est.

Comparative:

- My World of Warcraft mage is tougher than your character.

Superlative:

- My World of Warcraft mage is the toughest character ever.

There are also some adjectives that are irregular when you turn them into the comparative and superlative, and some, usually adjectives with two syllables, require that you simply add more or most in front of them.

The following examples are of some regular and some irregular adjectives.

Adjective:

- Kind
- Strong
- Good
- Bad
- Careful
- Awesome

Comparative:

- Kinder
- Stronger
- Better
- Worse
- More careful
- More awesome

Superlative:

- Kindest
- Strongest
- Best
- Worst
- Most careful

- Most awesome (as in "This is the *most awesome* OWL ever!")

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11.2.5: Adverbs

Adverbs

Adverbs are words that modify or describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb. Just as an adjective changes a noun, an adverb changes a verb, adjective, or adverb. Adverbs are easily identified because they often end in -ly, but this is certainly not always the case.

Descriptions make our writing rich and specific, so we shouldn't be afraid of using adjectives and adverbs in our sentences.

Look at these three sentences:

- Jon walked to the store to get canned goods for his zombie stash.
- Jon walked to the large store to get canned goods for his zombie stash.
- Jon walked urgently to the massively large store to get canned goods for his zombie stash.

As you can see, the last sentence is the most descriptive and informative. The use of adverbs and adjectives helps our writing come alive. The following page on adverbs will provide helpful tips on how to correctly use adverbs and give you examples of how adverbs can add descriptive detail to your writing.

Order of Adverbs

Adverbs most commonly describe how, but below is a more comprehensive list of the most common types of adverbs.

Type of Adverb	Example
Adverbs of manner (or how)	Christine sang the song atrociously. No more karaoke for her!
Adverbs of time	Michelle did her homework yesterday, but she did the wrong assignment.
Adverbs of place	I met my friend at the coffee shop, and that's where we saw the first signs of the outbreak.
Adverbs of degree	It's too quiet in here.
Adverbs of frequency	Michael Jordan rarely misses a free throw, but Shaq frequently does.
Adverbs of purpose	I clean the litter box every day to keep the house from smelling.

And like adjectives, adverbs have a "royal order." While you may already have an innate sense of this order, it can be helpful to review the rules.

The Royal Order of Adverbs

Verb	Manner	Place	Frequency	Time	Purpose
Beth swims	enthusiastically	in the pool	every evening	before dusk	to keep in shape.
Dad walks	impatiently	into town	every morning	before work	to get a newspaper.
Joe naps		in his room	every afternoon	after lunch.	

Adapted from Adverbs. (n.d.) Capital Community College Foundation. Retrieved from grammar.ccc.commnet.edu

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11.2.6: Propositions

Prepositions

Perhaps you had to memorize every preposition (there are well over 100) when you were in junior high school, but have you ever thought about the importance of these “little” words? Prepositions are little words with a big purpose: they show relationships of time, place, and space.

We might call them “glue” words because they bring other words together in ways that create meaning. Look at something you’ve read recently and take out the prepositions. Here is an example of a sentence written with and without prepositions:

With prepositions: As soon as I closed the door, the turkeys that had been waiting at the wood line ran to eat the corn I had just put out for the squirrels.

Without prepositions: As soon I closed the door, the turkeys that had been waiting the wood line ran eat the corn I had just put out the squirrels.

They may be generally small in letters, but prepositions are important words that give great meaning for time and place relationships among actions, objects, and ideas. It’s important to distinguish if you are throwing a ball to someone or at someone. Did you want your sandwich with or without onions? Do you need that zombie fort built at the end of summer or before the end of summer?

Even though they are small words, prepositions can be difficult—particularly for someone learning English—because their use isn’t always logical. As an example, most mid-Westerners speak of standing *in* line, but many on the East coast speak of standing *on* line. It would be a lot of fun and quite enlightening to write some sentences using some of the prepositions on the following page and then comparing those sentences with a friend from a different part of the country.

Common Prepositions

Although you no longer have to memorize the preposition list, it can be helpful to review the list of some of the most common prepositions and think about the meaning for each one.

Of course, it’s important to remember that many of these words can also be different parts of speech. English is fun, right?

Common Prepositions

- aboard
- about
- above
- across
- after
- against
- along
- amid
- among
- around
- as
- at
- before
- behind
- below
- beneath
- beside
- between
- beyond
- but

- by
- considering
- despite
- down
- during
- except
- excluding
- following
- for
- from
- in
- inside
- into
- like
- near
- of
- off
- on
- onto
- outside
- over
- past
- regarding
- since
- than
- though
- to
- toward
- under
- underneath
- until
- up
- upon
- verses
- with
- within
- without

Preposition Tips

As you work to make good decisions about your preposition choices, you should consider the following preposition tips:

- It's actually acceptable to end a sentence with a preposition. Contemporary scholars and writing style guides acknowledge the acceptability of ending a sentence with a preposition (Casagrande, 2006). It's natural and conversational to write short sentences that end with prepositions.
  - Did you find what you were looking for?

However, you should be aware that some professors prefer that you don't end a sentence with a preposition. See how correctness is relative?

- You should avoid unnecessary prepositions because using prepositions unnecessarily can make your writing wordy and even confusing.

- I am not [for] sure I have the answer.
- Frank apparently fell off [of] his horse while doing a stunt for a YouTube video.

- The difference between "beside" and "besides" can be confusing. Beside means next to. Besides means in addition to.
- The difference between "between" and "among" can also be confusing. You should use between when referring to two people or things, and you should use among when referring to more than two people or things.

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11.2.7: Articles

Articles

Well, if you thought prepositions were “little” words, wait until we consider the part of speech called articles. Articles are similar to adjectives in that they modify nouns, but unlike adjectives, they don’t really describe a noun; they just identify a noun.

Articles are the smallest of the small but still serve an important function. We have three articles in the English language: "a, an" and "the".

"The" is the definite article, which means it refers to a specific noun in a group.

"A" or "an" is the indefinite article, which means it refers to any member of a group. You would use the indefinite article when you aren’t trying to distinguish a particular noun.

Whether you use "a" or "an" depends on the noun that follows it. In general, you would use "a" if the noun begins with a consonant and "an" if the noun begins with a vowel.

- a game
- an opportunity

Then, as always in English grammar, there are a few tricky exceptions. If a noun begins with h, you should think about the sound it makes.

- an hour
- a horse

And if a noun starts with a vowel, but it makes a y sound, you should use "a" instead of "an".

- a university
- a user
- an umbrella

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11.2.8: Conjunctions

Conjunctions

If words are the building blocks for our writing, then good transitions are the cement that holds them together. To make these transitions in our writing we need to turn to conjunctions. A conjunction is a word or words used to show the connection between ideas.

The following pages will provide you with details about what conjunctions are and what they do. But, this classic Conjunction Junction from 1973 will provide you with a fun overview before you learn more.

Disney Educational Productions. (2011, December 8). *Schoolhouse rock: Grammar - conjunction junction music video*. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPoBE-E8VOc

Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions coordinate or join two equal parts. They are particularly important because, when used with a comma, they can actually connect complete sentences.

Of course, they don't always have to connect complete sentences. Coordinating conjunctions can also connect smaller, equal parts of a sentence.

The key to using coordinating conjunctions is to think about what they are coordinating. This will help you make decisions about which one to use and how to punctuate.

First, however, we should look at the list of coordinating conjunctions. There are only seven, and you may have heard of them as the FANBOYS.

- For
- And
- Nor
- But
- Or
- Yet
- So

If you are using a coordinating conjunction to connect two complete sentences, you must also use a comma.

- I knew that phrase from the debate would be a meme, but I am surprised at how quickly it happened.

If you aren't connecting two complete sentences and are just connecting smaller, equal parts of a sentence, you should not use a comma.

- I knew that phrase from the debate would be a meme but am surprised at how quickly it happened.

You will notice there is no comma because we no longer have two complete sentences (or independent clauses)—one before and after the coordinating conjunction. In the second sentence, the conjunction is simply coordinating a compound predicate.

Coordinating conjunctions can also coordinate smaller words and phrases. The idea is that they coordinate equal parts:

- Apples and oranges
- Running for office or staying home to relax
- Werewolves and vampires
- Small but powerful

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions connect parts that aren't equal. In fact, you can tell by their name that they make a phrase subordinate to the main phrase or clause.

Common subordinating conjunctions are "after, although, because, before, even though, since, though", and "when".

The key to using subordinating conjunctions correctly is to remember that a subordinating conjunction sets off a phrase, so there should always be words with it.

When a subordinating conjunction appears at the beginning of a sentence, the subordinating phrase is always set off with a comma. When a subordinating conjunction appears at the end of a sentence, the subordinating phrase is not usually set off with commas.

The exceptions (and there are always exceptions, right?) are when you use words like "although" or "even though" at the end of a sentence. Because these set-off phrases show contrast, they still get a comma, even when they are used at the end of the sentence.

Examples:

- Although I tried, I could not outrun the werewolf.
- I could not outrun the werewolf, although I tried.
- Because my alarm clock did not go off, I missed the full moon and will now have to wait until next month to go out and play.
- I missed the full moon and will now have to wait until next month to go out and play because my alarm clock did not go off.

You will notice the comma with the "although" phrase, no matter where it appears in the sentence, but the "because" phrase follows the standard "rule."

It's also important to note that "although" cannot stand alone like a conjunctive adverb, which will be discussed on the next page.

- Although, I tried to outrun the werewolf.

The above example is a common, incorrect usage of "although" and actually makes a sentence fragment, which is a serious grammatical error.

Conjunctive Adverbs

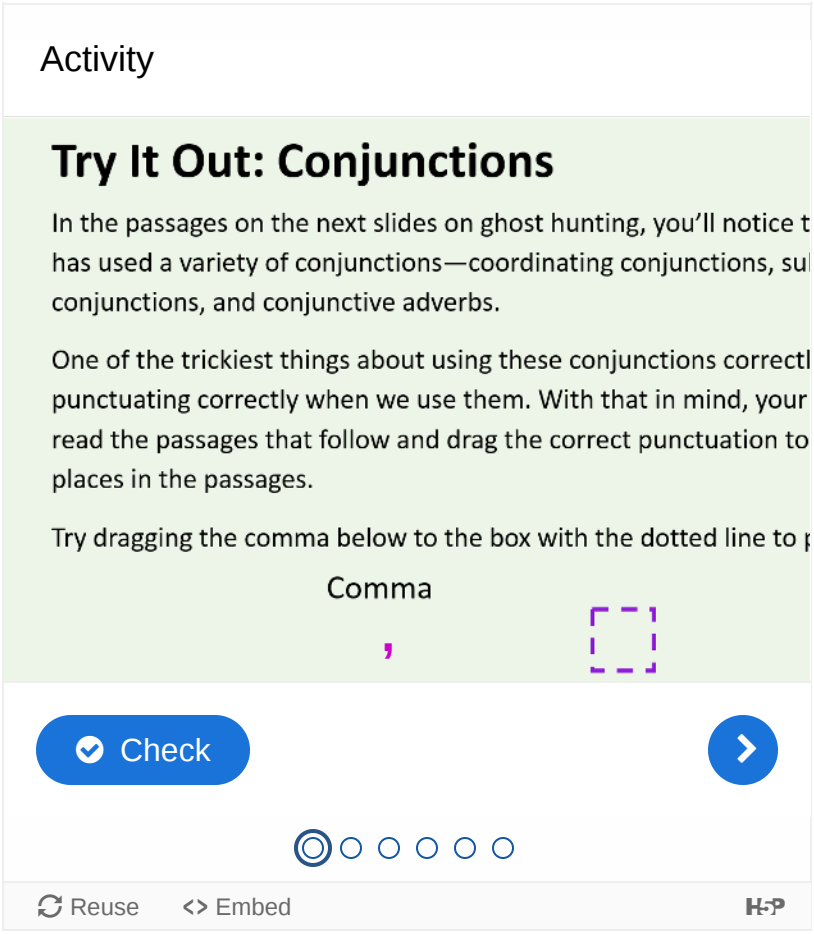
The conjunctions that are not exactly conjunctions are conjunctive adverbs. "Conjunctive adverbs are used to connect other words. Therefore, conjunctive adverbs act like conjunctions even though they are not technically considered to be conjunctions…. Conjunctive adverbs are also called transitions because they link ideas." (Rozarkis, 1997, p. 55)

Conjunctive adverbs are words like "however, moreover, therefore", and "furthermore".

They provide important transitions between ideas and are commonly used to help create a nice, flowing work. Often, you'll see a conjunctive adverb used after a semicolon to start a new independent clause, as illustrated in this example:

- I have several back-up zombie plans in place; however, I am sure my first plan is the best plan.

However, it's also important to note that you don't have to use a conjunctive adverb every time you use a semicolon, and you don't have to use a semicolon to use a conjunctive adverb. Conjunctive adverbs work well after periods, too.



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11.2.9: Interjections

Interjections

“Interjections are short exclamations like "Oh!, Um" or "Ah!" They have no real grammatical value but we use them quite often, usually more in speaking than in writing” (Interjections, 2001, para. 1).

While interjections are very short, they communicate a great deal because they are typically used to express emotion. “While any word that shows strong feelings can be an interjection, look for the usual suspects: Wow!, Zap!, Pop!, and the rest of the family” (Rozakis, 1997, p. 59).

- “Ouch! That hurts!” I said to the vampire.
- Whoops! Did I forget to include you in the zombie plan?

Because interjections communicate strong emotions, they should not be over-used. “With interjections, a little goes a long way. Use these marks of punctuation as you would hot pepper or hysterics, because they are strong and edgy” (Rozakis, 1997, p. 59).

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11.2.10: Try It Out

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11.2.11: Putting It All Together

You have learned about many different parts of speech and some basic guidelines to correct usage. This is a lot to take in for sure! To help you review, go through the presentation below, which provides a basic overview of what you have learned about the parts of speech.

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11.2.12: Time to Write

If you're a native speaker of English, most of the information in the Parts of Speech chapter comes pretty naturally for you, but all of us have trouble with some aspects of grammar and usage from time to time.

As you edit, you should not worry about every single part of speech or what its function is. Instead, you should consider any struggles you have in your writing, review those guidelines, and keep that in mind as you edit. For example, if you have trouble with pronoun agreement, you should review the section on pronouns before you edit, so the guidelines for correctness will be fresh in your mind.

It's your turn now, and knowing more about correctness can help you as you edit your work and get it ready to submit to your professor.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

11.3: 20 Most Common Grammar Errors

11.3.1: Wrong Word

11.3.2: Comma After Introductory Element

11.3.3: Documentation Common Error

11.3.4: Pronoun Reference

11.3.5: Spelling

11.3.6: Quotation Error

11.3.7: Unnecessary Comma

11.3.8: Capitalization

11.3.9: Missing Word

11.3.10: Faulty Sentence Structure

11.3.11: Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element

11.3.12: Verb Tense Shift

11.3.13: Missing Comma in Compound Sentence

11.3.14: Apostrophe Errors

11.3.15: Run-On Sentences

11.3.16: Comma Splice

11.3.17: Pronoun Agreement

11.3.18: Poorly Integrated Quote

11.3.19: Hyphens

11.3.20: Sentence Fragment

11.3.21: Try It Out

11.3.22: Putting It All Together

11.3.23: Time to Write

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11.3.1: Wrong Word

Wrong Word

Wrong word errors are really common and are number one on the list. Sometimes, we make a wrong word error when we are using the thesaurus and trying to find the biggest word we can find in order to make ourselves sound really smart. This isn't the greatest strategy. Sometimes, it's better just to be simple, and it's always better just to be clear.

We also have to be careful of the spell checker. Sometimes, we misspell words, and then the spell checker makes a change to a word we don't want. Of course, we may be in a hurry and never even notice. Take a look at this sentence to see the problems wrong word errors can create:

- Sometimes, I will just sit and watch strangers in the crowd, but it is defiantly awful when I accidentally make eye contact with one of them.

In this sentence, writing "defiantly" when we mean "definitely", *definitely* changes the meaning in the sentence.

Here is the sentence again with the correct word:

- Sometimes, I will just sit and watch strangers in the crowd, but it is definitely awful when I accidentally make eye contact with one of them.

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11.3.2: Comma After Introductory Element

Comma After Introductory Element

It’s important to remember that introductory words and phrases—any words or phrases that come before the main clause in a sentence—should be set off with a comma. Here is an example of a sentence that does not include the required comma and then the correction:

- (Missing Comma) In case you were wondering I never allow myself to be exposed to direct sunlight unless I have my scarf, my sunglasses, and a large umbrella.
- In case you were wondering, I never allow myself to be exposed to direct sunlight unless I have my scarf, my sunglasses, and a large umbrella.

For more information on this comma rule, be sure to check out the Comma section in the Punctuation chapter.

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11.3.3: Documentation Common Error

Documentation Common Error

Incomplete or Missing Documentation

The third most common error on the list relates to proper documentation. It's so important to remember to cite all borrowed information. No matter your documentation style, whether it is APA format, MLA format, or Chicago Style, all require some kind of citation for quoted, paraphrased, and summarized material.

REMEMBER: You must not only cite people's words, but you must also cite their ideas. Errors of this nature can get you into a lot of trouble because incomplete or missing documentation is plagiarism.

For more information on proper documentation in APA, MLA, or Chicago Style, be sure to check out the Citation & Documentation area of the Excelsior OWL.

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11.3.4: Pronoun Reference

Pronoun Reference

Pronoun reference errors also make the list because pronouns seem to give a lot of beginning writers some trouble. A pronoun reference error occurs when you use a pronoun like "he" or "she", and it's not clear what that pronoun refers to. Here is an example:

- When Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker were battling with their light sabers, he became angry.

Who does "he" refer to? It isn't clear. A pronoun should clearly refer to its antecedent (the word it replaces), so if the antecedent is not clear, you need to revise. Here's an example of how you might correct the pronoun reference error:

- When Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker were battling with their light sabers, Luke became angry.

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11.3.5: Spelling

Spelling

In the age of spell checkers, it's hard to imagine that spelling errors would top the most common error list, but they do. First, it's important to remember to run the spell checker. Even though you have to remember to check your spell checker, spell checkers are a good place to start when it comes to spelling errors.

Still, there are plenty of spelling errors the spell checker won't catch. In addition to possibly creating wrong-word errors, as discussed earlier, spell checkers also miss misspelled words like names and other proper nouns, as illustrated in the following example:

- On my vacation to France, I went to Pares and visited the Eifel Tower, the Louvre museum, and Jim Morrison's grave.

The spell checker missed these errors. Here is the corrected version of the sentence:

- On my vacation to France, I went to Paris and visited the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre museum, and Jim Morrison's grave.

So, be sure to run your spell checker, but, then, don't forget to double and triple check your writing. Spell checkers do not catch everything.

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11.3.6: Quotation Error

Quotation Error

Using quotation marks correctly can be a little tricky, especially when you need to use other types of punctuation with them. Mechanical errors related to quotation marks make the most-common error list because beginning writers often forget that commas and periods go inside the quotation marks. Here is an example:

- “When you are courting a nice girl, an hour seems like a second. When you sit on a red-hot cinder, a second seems like an hour. That’s relativity”, said Einstein.

In this case, the comma placed outside the quotation marks is incorrect. The comma should be placed inside the quotation marks like this:

- “When you are courting a nice girl, an hour seems like a second. When you sit on a red-hot cinder, a second seems like an hour. That’s relativity,” said Einstein.

It’s important to note, however, that not all punctuation automatically goes inside the quotation marks. Question marks are a little trickier. If the only part in quotations is a question, then the question mark should go inside the quotation marks; otherwise, the question mark actually goes outside of the quotation marks. Tricky for sure!

Also, beginning writers often forget that titles of shorter works, like essays and short stories, should be placed inside quotation marks. Longer works, like books and magazines, should be placed in italics.

- I read the essay “The Marginal World” by Rachel Carson in the book *Best American Essays of the Century*.

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11.3.7: Unnecessary Comma

Unnecessary Comma

When beginning writers are first learning comma rules, they have a tendency to forget that the rules all depend upon the situation. So, when you learn to place a comma before a coordinating conjunction like "and, but," or "so" when you join two independent clauses, you might have an urge to place a comma before "and, but," or "so" every time you use these words. You should avoid this urge!

Just because you need to use commas with coordinating conjunctions sometimes doesn't mean you'll use them all the time.

- I have a wide variety of supernatural powers, but wish I had the power to go out in the daylight.

In this example, you don't need a comma before the "but" because you aren't combining two independent clauses. Here is a corrected version of the sentence:

- I have a wide variety of supernatural powers but wish I had the power to go out in the daylight.

You should also be careful that you aren't using commas unnecessarily around information that is essential to the sentence. The comma rule is that non-essential information should be set off with commas, but essential information should not.

- I find that a little fear is the best seasoning, for my food, so I often sneak up on my husband while he cooks and frighten him.

In this example, "for my food" is not extra information that should be set off with commas. But, you do need a comma before the "so" to separate the two independent clauses. Here is a corrected version of the sentence:

- I find that a little fear is the best seasoning for my food, so I often sneak up on my husband while he cooks and frighten him.

For more information on these comma rules, be sure to check out the Comma section in the Punctuation chapter.

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11.3.8: Capitalization

Capitalization

Some teachers blame text messaging. After all, how many times have you written out a quick text message, not worrying about where you need to capitalize? You, like many others, have probably done this quite often.

Interestingly, capitalization errors appeared on the most-common error list even before everyone was walking around with their heads over their cell phones text messaging every other minute.

Of course, the reality is that teachers now often complain that students don't even capitalize "I" in a sentence. That could likely be related to text messaging. Still, other capitalization errors may not be.

Whatever the reasons behind the errors, it's important to be aware of capitalization rules. Be careful to capitalize words that should be capitalized, such as proper nouns, and not capitalize words that should not be capitalized.

But, how can you know what should and shouldn't be capitalized? If you are unsure, review the differences between proper nouns and common nouns in the Parts of Speech chapter.

Capitalization errors can really have a negative impact on the impressions your readers have of your writing. Take a look at the following sentence:

- i took a walk in central park and saw a Mime, who was pretending to be a Policeman, get sprayed with mace by an elderly woman because she thought he was trying to steal her purse.

Now, take a look at the sentence with correct capitalization:

- I took a walk in Central Park and saw a mime, who was pretending to be a policeman, get sprayed with mace by an elderly woman because she thought he was trying to steal her purse.

It's important to edit carefully and review the rules if necessary!

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11.3.9: Missing Word

Missing Word

Missing word errors make this list because we are too often in a hurry when we edit. Our brains are great. We can read right through sentences and put in the words that need to be there even if words are missing. Of course, others might quickly notice the error, so we have to find ways to slow ourselves down and edit carefully. You don't want to write a sentence like the following example that is missing a small word with big meaning:

- I enjoy walking alone in the woods at night because I never what I will meet while I am out there in the dark.

Did you see the error? Look at the revised sentence below:

- I enjoy walking alone in the woods at night because I never know what I will meet while I am out there in the dark.

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11.3.10: Faulty Sentence Structure

Faulty Sentence Structure

Have you ever had a teacher say, “That sentence starts one way and ends another”? If you have, don’t feel badly. Others make this same mistake all the time. Sometimes, we simply lose our train of thought when we write, and we literally start a sentence one way and end it another, as illustrated in the following example:

- I occasionally get the urge to study late at night for instance my exams are going to take me longer than usual to study for because this works.

It’s tough to make sense of this sentence, right?

Of course, this is not the only faulty sentence structure error you might make. It’s important to pay close attention to your sentence structure to make sure you have both a subject and a verb. And, if you are listing items or phrases in a sentence, make sure you keep the items in your list in the same form. Doing so keeps your sentences “parallel,” which is a good thing.

Here is an example of a sentence without parallel structure:

- I start my day with breakfast, exercising, and checking out the latest blogs.

In the sentence above, "breakfast" is a noun, and "exercising" and "checking" begin verb phrases. The items on the list are not in the same form. Here is a correction where the items listed are in the same form:

- I start my day by eating breakfast, exercising, and checking out the latest blogs.

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11.3.11: Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element

Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element

Just as you should not put commas around essential or restrictive information in a sentence, you must remember to put commas around information that is non-essential or nonrestrictive.

If the information is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, you need to be sure to set it off with commas. Here is an example of a sentence without proper commas around the nonrestrictive element:

- Moving into a cave especially one that is already occupied is not a decision one should make without considerable forethought.

Here is the corrected version:

- Moving into a cave, especially one that is already occupied, is not a decision one should make without considerable forethought.

If you have trouble deciding whether or not you need commas around “extra” information in your sentences, be sure to review the comma rules in the Punctuation chapter.

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11.3.12: Verb Tense Shift

Verb Tense Shift

You want to be sure that you are always consistent with your verb tense. When you shift verb tenses for no reason, and this is an easy mistake to make, you can really confuse your readers.

If you're writing in the present tense, be sure you stay in the present tense. If you're writing in the past tense, be sure you stay in the past tense. The exception would be if you need to shift tenses to tell a story, but that would be purposeful shifting. It's the random, accidental shifting that causes the problems, as illustrated in this example:

She grabs my hand then flipped me like I weighed nothing. This showed what a good self-defense course has done.

Here is what a corrected version of the sentence looks like:

She grabbed my hand then flipped me like I weighed nothing. This showed what a good self-defense course has done.

You should also be aware that certain types of writing require either past or present tense. For example, research in APA format often needs to be presented in the past tense, but a literary analysis written in MLA format needs to be presented using present tense verbs. It's called the literary present tense. Below is a table of APA 7th edition verb tense recommendations for literature reviews and research papers.

If you're ever unsure about tense requirements, be sure to ask your professor.

Paper Section	Recommended tense	Example
Literature review (or whenever discussing other researchers' work)	Past	Quinn (2020) presented
	Present Perfect	Since then, many investigators have used
Method Description of procedure	Past	Participants completed a survey
	Present Perfect	Others have used similar approaches
Reporting of results	Past	Results were nonsignificant Scores increased Hypotheses were supported
Discussion of implications of results	Present	The results indicate
Presentation of conclusions, limitations, future directions, and so forth	Present	We conclude Limitations of the study are

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11.3.13: Missing Comma in Compound Sentence

Missing Comma in Compound Sentence

When you join two independent clauses (complete sentences) with a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet—also known as the FANBOYS), you must place a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

The rule is very clear, here. The comma before the coordinating conjunction works *with* the coordinating conjunction to help make a proper boundary between the two independent clauses.

- I understand that vampires and ghouls need love but I don't think they really understand just how attached I am to my vital, bodily fluids.

In this example, the sentence is missing the comma before the but because the but joins two complete thoughts. Leaving out this necessary comma creates an error because you have two sentences connected without a proper boundary between those sentences.

Here is a correction for the sentence:

- I understand that vampires and ghouls need love, but I don't think they really understand just how attached I am to my vital, bodily fluids.

For more information on this comma rule, be sure to check out the Comma section in the Punctuation chapter.

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11.3.14: Apostrophe Errors

Apostrophe Errors

Apostrophes give many writers a lot of trouble. Sometimes, you might be tempted to put an apostrophe where it does not belong, such as when you are simply making a word plural. Other times, you need to make a word possessive, but you might forget to use the apostrophe.

Then, of course, there is that whole "its" / "it's" thing that confuses most everyone.

Remember, the rule is to use an apostrophe when you need to show possession or ownership. The exception is with its.

"Its" shows ownership because "it's" means "it is". So, it's like "it's" is already taken, so "its" gets to be an ownership exception. To make sure you are using "it's" correctly, just say "it is" when you read it. If it makes sense, you're fine. However, if you're trying to show ownership, and it is would not work in the sentence, you need to make the change to "its".

For more information on the apostrophe, be sure to check out the Apostrophe section in the Punctuation chapter (or if you just need to brush up your skills, visit the Apostrophe Refresher). Otherwise, you might end up with a sentence like this:

- Its abundantly clear, to me, that creature's of the night are just misunderstood and misguided beings who sometimes err in judgment and eat their neighbors' as well as their neighbors families.

And, you would want a sentence like this:

- It's abundantly clear, to me, that creatures of the night are just misunderstood and misguided beings who sometimes err in judgment and eat their neighbors as well as their neighbors' families.

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11.3.15: Run-On Sentences

Run-On Sentences

Fused or Run-On Sentence

A fused sentence is sometimes called a run-on sentence. The concept is simple. If your teacher marks fused sentence or run-on on your paper, it's because you have put two complete thoughts or independent clauses together without the proper punctuation or any kind of sentence boundary. Here is an example:

- There were a thousand zombies cheering for the home team when I walked onto the field I don't think even one of them noticed me.

And, here is the corrected sentence:

- There were a thousand zombies cheering for the home team when I walked onto the field; I don't think even one of them noticed me.

The key is to remember that you must have some kind of boundary between your independent clauses. You can use punctuation, such as the period or the semicolon, or you can use a comma *with* a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet).

NOTE: A comma alone cannot separate independent clauses. Using a comma to separate independent clauses actually creates a comma splice.

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11.3.16: Comma Splice

Comma Splice

Many students think a comma splice is just any kind of comma error, but a comma splice is a very specific type of comma error.

A comma splice occurs when you use a comma to separate two independent clauses. A comma is not strong enough to perform this function, which causes the problem. It’s important to remember to use proper punctuation to separate your independent clauses; otherwise, you end up with a sentence like this:

He promised me, if I didn’t report him, he would never do it again, however, the next night, he was back, playing his bagpipes under my balcony.

Here, you should notice the only comma error is the one between "again" and "however". The reason this is a comma splice is because "the" actually begins a new sentence or independent clause, but there is not a proper boundary between these two sentences. Here is how the sentence could be corrected:

He promised me, if I didn’t report him, he would never do it again; however, the next night, he was back, playing his bagpipes under my balcony.

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11.3.17: Pronoun Agreement

Pronoun Agreement

Pronoun agreement can be trickier than it might seem on the surface. The rule is that we must make sure our pronouns agree in number and gender with the nouns they are replacing. For example, when we write a sentence about a girl named Sophia, we would use "she" as the pronoun to refer to her.

But things get a little more confusing when we are talking about a kind of abstract person, and the “rule” on this subject has recently changed in most circles. In the recent past, to avoid sexist language, we couldn’t write "he" or "she". Instead, we had to write "he or she".

But, because most people would just end up writing "they", which technically does not agree in number, the “rule” began to change. This is a great example of how living languages, like English, change, and the change happens when people make a change happen. It’s really pretty exciting!

It used to be incorrect to use what we now call “the singular they.” Here is an example:

- If you want a child to learn, it is helpful if you make learning fun for them.

Now, many style guides accept the use of "they" or "them" to refer to a singular noun.

So, now, this would be considered correct:

- If you want a child to learn, it is helpful if you make learning fun for them.

When in doubt, using a plural noun is safest:

- If you want children to learn, it is helpful if you make learning fun for them.

This way, you avoid any awkwardness of the singular "them", and your pronoun is now also in agreement with "children".

NOTE: Because the use of the singular "they" is new, you may find some people who disagree, but most academics now agree that the singular "they" is correct. Please always refer to your style guide, as some style guides still recommend not using the singular "they".

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11.3.18: Poorly Integrated Quote

Poorly Integrated Quote

Any teacher who has ever assigned and graded writing has probably complained about this error. Too often, beginning writers will simply “plop” a quote into a paragraph without any setup or context. This is incredibly confusing for your readers, so it’s important to make sure you smoothly integrate your quotes into the sentences around the quote.

Although there are no “rules” for such things, it’s always a good idea to provide a phrase of some kind to set up your quote and some commentary after your quote to make sure your readers understand the relevance of the quote. Otherwise, you may end up with a quote like this:

Albert Einstein was a great man and a great scientist. He was one of the most advanced thinkers of our age. “The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing” (Einstein Quotes, 2012).

Here, it feels like the quote is just dropped in without a clear context. If you struggle with quote integration, you’ll want to check out lessons on effective source integration.

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11.3.19: Hyphens

Hyphens

Hyphens can be a little tricky, but they are important. For example, there is a world of difference between a dirty-movie theater and a dirty movie theater. You probably wouldn't want to go to either one, but there *is* a big difference between the two.

Hyphens are tricky because location is also very important in determining whether or not you need to hyphenate words.

The rule is pretty clear, however. Most of us just need a reminder. When you have two or more words that modify or describe a noun that follows, you should hyphenate those words. You should not hyphenate the same words if they come after the noun.

Take a look at the following example where hyphenation errors exist in several places:

- It was clear that, after his two dollar hair-cut, Bertram began suffering from low self esteem.

Here is what the correction should look like:

- It was clear that, after his two-dollar haircut, Bertram began suffering from low self-esteem.

If you need help figuring out where hyphens should and should not be, be sure to check out the Hyphen section in Punctuation chapter.

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11.3.20: Sentence Fragment

Sentence Fragment

Sentence fragments always make the list of the most common errors, and they are among the most seriously stigmatizing errors we can make. To put it simply, a sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence that you have punctuated as if it is a complete sentence.

Sometimes, fragments are missing a verb. Sometimes, fragments are missing a subject. Sometimes, a fragment is simply a dependent clause punctuated like a complete sentence. Here are some examples:

- The haunting of the house on the craggy hill just outside of town.
- Because they are hairy and frightening with large, pointed fangs and shiny, yellow eyes.

You'll notice that each of these so-called sentences is not a complete sentence. They are both missing parts that would make them complete.

You always have options about how you correct a sentence fragment, but here are some possible corrections for our two sample sentence fragments:

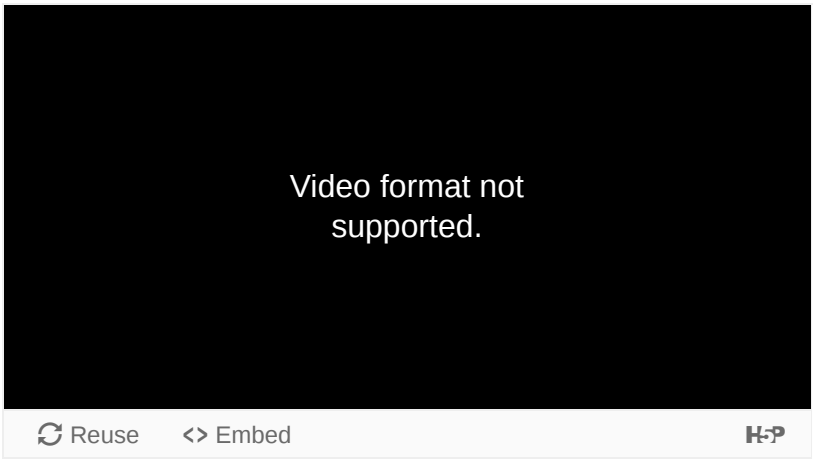
- The haunting of the house on the craggy hill just outside of town was the subject of a recent documentary.
- I am afraid of those spiders because they are hairy and frightening with large, pointed fangs and shiny, yellow eyes.

Tips from the Professor

Fragments are among the most serious errors in academic writing. While you may read fiction and informal prose that contain sentence fragments, in academic writing, fragments are generally frowned upon. In fact, research on how errors are perceived by people indicates that fragments are what we call "status marking" errors, which means people will make negative assumptions about the intelligence of the writer when they see fragments in writing.

Of course, making a sentence fragment error has nothing to do with your intelligence. Usually, for native speakers of English, making a sentence fragment error is more about not editing carefully or just not being practiced in the rules.

In this video, the Grammar Professor will review what a fragment is and how you can avoid fragments in your academic writing.



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11.3.21: Try It Out

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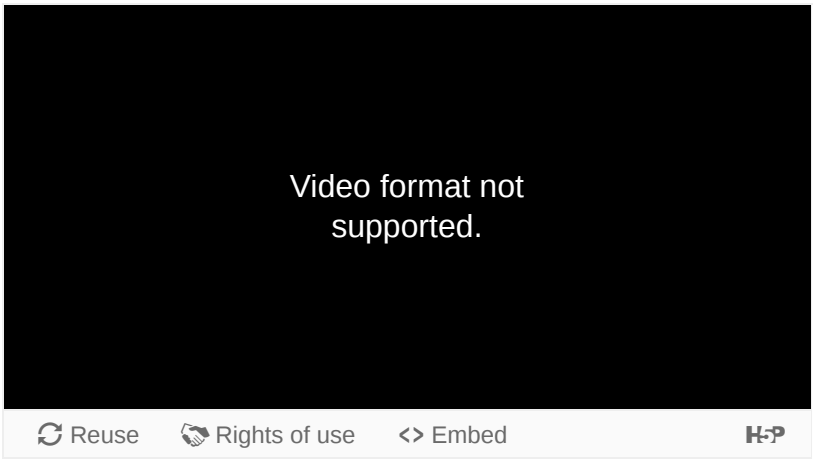
11.3.22: Putting It All Together

Putting It All Together

In this section of Grammar Essentials, you have learned about the 20 most common errors students make and how you can avoid them. Hopefully, you have also learned that, if you have had these errors marked on your papers, you aren't alone. The key is having awareness, as this can help you when you edit.

To help you review, check out the video below, which provides a basic overview of what you have learned about the 20 most common errors students in the United States make.



NOTE: Because the use of the singular "they" is new, you may find some people who disagree, but most academics now agree that the singular "they" is correct. Please always refer to your style guide, as some style guides still recommend not using the singular "they".

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11.3.23: Time to Write

Time to Write

Now that you have the knowledge about the most common errors students in the U.S. make, think about your own writing. Which of these errors have you struggled with?

The next step is to be considerate of these errors as you edit. Review the most common errors list, paying close attention to issues you have had marked by teachers. Which ones stand out to you?

It's your turn now. Understanding these common errors can lead to better editing strategies, which helps you have cleaner, clearer writing.

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Index

T

taxonomy

4.7.3: Activites

V

visual aids

10.2: Incorporating Effective Visuals into a Presentation

Glossary

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

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    - 1.11: Introductions - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.12: Conclusions - *Undeclared*
    - 1.13: Comparative Chart of Writing Strategies - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 2.1: What is Generative AI? - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 2.7: Guides and Resources for Writing with AI - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3: Engaging with Texts- Read and Respond - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.1: Reading to Write - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.2: How to Read Like a Writer - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.3: Interpretation, Analysis, and Close Reading - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.3.1: Interpretation - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.3.2: Analysis - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.3.3: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.4: Summary and Response - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.4.1: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.4.2: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.5: Analysis and Synthesis - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.5.1: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.5.2: Activities - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.5.3: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.6: Putting It Together- Writing Your Response - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.6.1: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4: Understanding Our Stories- Personal Narrative Writing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.1: Introduction to Narrative Essay - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.2: The Art of Narration - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3: Video- The Danger of a Single Story - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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- 4.4.4: Salvation by Langston Hughes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.4.5: The Year I Grew Wildly, While Men Looked On by Ashley Ford - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 4.5: Narrative Techniques- Your Writing Process - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.6: Writing for Success- Narration - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.7: Describing a Scene or Experience - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.7.1: Section Introduction- Describing a Scene or Experience - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.7.2: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.7.3: Activites - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.7.4: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.8: Telling a story - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.8.1: Section Introduction- Telling a Story - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.8.2: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.8.3: Activities - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.8.4: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.9: Reflecting on an Experience - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9.1: Section Introduction- Reflecting on an Experience - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9.2: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9.3: Activities - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9.4: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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- 4.11: Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.11.1: Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.11.2: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.11.3: Endnotes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.12: Supporting Storytelling with AI - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 5: Exploring Our World- Expository Writing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 5.1: Expository vs. Argumentative Writing - *Undeclared*
  - 5.2: Effective Thesis Statements - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 5.3: Video- Thesis Explained - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 5.4: Definition Essay Overview - *Undeclared*
  - 5.5: How to Write an Expository Definition Essay - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 5.6: Illustration/Example Approach - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 5.7: Cause and Effect Approach - *CC BY 4.0*
  - 5.8: Classification Approach - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
  - 5.9: Process Analysis Approach - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
  - 5.10: Student Sample- Definition-Expository Essay - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 6: Finding, Understanding, and Using Outside Sources - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 6.1: Writing with Outside Evidence - *Undeclared*
  - 6.2: Effectively Integrating Textual Evidence - *Undeclared*
  - 6.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 6.4: MLA Format - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 6.5: Formatting the Works Cited Page (MLA) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 6.6: Citing Generative AI Content - *Undeclared*
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  - 7.1: Revising - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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  - 8.1: Introduction to Argument Essay - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 8.2: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 8.3: Avoiding Logical Fallacies - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 8.4: Writing for Success- Argument - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 8.5: Activities - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 8.6: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9: Entering the Conversation- Your Research Process - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 9.1: Researching a writing assignment - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 9.2: Introduction - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 9.3: Sources - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.4: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.5: Evaluating Source Credibility - *Undeclared*
- 9.6: Finding sources- Academic databases - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.7: Reading sources - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.8: Using sources - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.9: Citing sources - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.10: Review- Basic citation styles - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.11: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 10: Creating Presentations - Sharing Your Ideas - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
  - 10.1: Organizing a Visual Presentation - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
  - 10.2: Incorporating Effective Visuals into a Presentation - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
  - 10.3: Giving a Presentation - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
  - 10.E: Creating Presentations - Sharing Your Ideas (Exercises) - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
- 11: Grammar Essentials - *Undeclared*
  - 11.1: Punctuation - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.1: Apostrophes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.2: Brackets - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.3: Colons - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.4: Commas - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.5: Dashes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.6: Ellipses - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.7: Exclamation Marks - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.8: Hyphens - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.9: Parentheses - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.10: Periods - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.11: Question Marks - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.12: Quotation Marks - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.13: Semicolons - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.14: Try It Out - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.15: Putting It All Together - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.16: Time to Write - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 11.2: Parts of Speech - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.1: Nouns - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.2: Pronouns - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.3: Verbs - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.4: Adjectives - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.5: Adverbs - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.6: Propositions - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.7: Articles - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.8: Conjunctions - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.9: Interjections - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.10: Try It Out - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.11: Putting It All Together - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.12: Time to Write - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 11.3: 20 Most Common Grammar Errors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.1: Wrong Word - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.2: Comma After Introductory Element - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.3: Documentation Common Error - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.4: Pronoun Reference - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.5: Spelling - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.6: Quotation Error - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.7: Unnecessary Comma - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.8: Capitalization - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.9: Missing Word - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.10: Faulty Sentence Structure - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.11: Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.12: Verb Tense Shift - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.13: Missing Comma in Compound Sentence - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.14: Apostrophe Errors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.15: Run-On Sentences - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.16: Comma Splice - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.17: Pronoun Agreement - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.18: Poorly Integrated Quote - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.19: Hyphens - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.20: Sentence Fragment - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.21: Try It Out - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.22: Putting It All Together - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.23: Time to Write - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- Back Matter - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - Index - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - Glossary - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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  - Front Matter - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - TitlePage - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - InfoPage - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - Table of Contents - *Undeclared*
    - Licensing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 1: An Overview of the Writing Process - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.1: Introduction to Writing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.2: Your Role as a Learner - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.3: What is an Essay? - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.4: Defining the Writing Process - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.5: Videos- Prewriting Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.6: Audience - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.7: Thesis Statements - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.8: Organizing an Essay - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.9: Creating Paragraphs - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.10: Paragraphs - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.11: Introductions - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.12: Conclusions - *Undeclared*
    - 1.13: Comparative Chart of Writing Strategies - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2: Writing with Generative AI - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.1: What is Generative AI? - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.2: Ethics of AI-Generated Writing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.3: AI for Idea Generation - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.4: AI for Organizing Writing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.5: Edit and Revise with AI - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.6: Problems and Pitfalls of AI-Generated Texts - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.7: Guides and Resources for Writing with AI - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3: Engaging with Texts- Read and Respond - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.1: Reading to Write - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.2: How to Read Like a Writer - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.3: Interpretation, Analysis, and Close Reading - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.3.1: Interpretation - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.3.2: Analysis - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.3.3: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.4: Summary and Response - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.4.1: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.4.2: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.5: Analysis and Synthesis - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.5.1: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.5.2: Activities - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.5.3: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.6: Putting It Together- Writing Your Response - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 3.6.1: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4: Understanding Our Stories- Personal Narrative Writing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.1: Introduction to Narrative Essay - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.2: The Art of Narration - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3: Video- The Danger of a Single Story - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.4: Model Narrative Essays - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

        - 4.4.1: Only Daughter by Sandra Cisneros - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.4.2: Superman and Me by Sherman Alexie - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.4.3: Fish Cheeks by Amy Tan - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.4.4: Salvation by Langston Hughes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.4.5: The Year I Grew Wildly, While Men Looked On by Ashley Ford - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.5: Narrative Techniques- Your Writing Process - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.6: Writing for Success- Narration - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.7: Describing a Scene or Experience - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.7.1: Section Introduction- Describing a Scene or Experience - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.7.2: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.7.3: Activites - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.7.4: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.8: Telling a story - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.8.1: Section Introduction- Telling a Story - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.8.2: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.8.3: Activities - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.8.4: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9: Reflecting on an Experience - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.9.1: Section Introduction- Reflecting on an Experience - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.9.2: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.9.3: Activities - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.9.4: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.10: Narrative Beginnings and Endings - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.11: Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.11.1: Assignment- Descriptive Personal Narrative - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.11.2: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.11.3: Endnotes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.12: Supporting Storytelling with AI - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 5: Exploring Our World- Expository Writing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 5.1: Expository vs. Argumentative Writing - *Undeclared*
    - 5.2: Effective Thesis Statements - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 5.3: Video- Thesis Explained - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 5.4: Definition Essay Overview - *Undeclared*
    - 5.5: How to Write an Expository Definition Essay - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 5.6: Illustration/Example Approach - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 5.7: Cause and Effect Approach - *CC BY 4.0*
    - 5.8: Classification Approach - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
    - 5.9: Process Analysis Approach - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
    - 5.10: Student Sample- Definition-Expository Essay - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 6: Finding, Understanding, and Using Outside Sources - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 6.1: Writing with Outside Evidence - *Undeclared*
    - 6.2: Effectively Integrating Textual Evidence - *Undeclared*
    - 6.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 6.4: MLA Format - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 6.5: Formatting the Works Cited Page (MLA) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 6.6: Citing Generative AI Content - *Undeclared*
- 7: Revising and Polishing Your Papers - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 7.2: Editing and Proofreading - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 7.3: Formal Academic Voice - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 7.4: AI for Revision and Editing - *Undeclared*
    - 7.5: Peer Review Checklist - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 8: Taking a Stand- Argument Writing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 8.1: Introduction to Argument Essay - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 8.2: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 8.3: Avoiding Logical Fallacies - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 8.4: Writing for Success- Argument - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 8.5: Activities - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 8.6: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9: Entering the Conversation- Your Research Process - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 9.1: Researching a writing assignment - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 9.2: Introduction - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 9.3: Sources - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.4: Techniques - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.5: Evaluating Source Credibility - *Undeclared*
- 9.6: Finding sources- Academic databases - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.7: Reading sources - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.8: Using sources - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.9: Citing sources - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.10: Review- Basic citation styles - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9.11: Model Texts by Student Authors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 10: Creating Presentations - Sharing Your Ideas - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
  - 10.1: Organizing a Visual Presentation - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
  - 10.2: Incorporating Effective Visuals into a Presentation - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
  - 10.3: Giving a Presentation - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
  - 10.E: Creating Presentations - Sharing Your Ideas (Exercises) - *CC BY-NC-SA 3.0*
- 11: Grammar Essentials - *Undeclared*
  - 11.1: Punctuation - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.1: Apostrophes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.2: Brackets - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.3: Colons - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.4: Commas - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.5: Dashes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.6: Ellipses - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.7: Exclamation Marks - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.8: Hyphens - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.9: Parentheses - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.10: Periods - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.11: Question Marks - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.12: Quotation Marks - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.13: Semicolons - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.14: Try It Out - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.15: Putting It All Together - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1.16: Time to Write - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 11.2: Parts of Speech - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.1: Nouns - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.2: Pronouns - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.3: Verbs - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.4: Adjectives - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.5: Adverbs - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.6: Propositions - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.7: Articles - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.8: Conjunctions - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.9: Interjections - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.10: Try It Out - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.11: Putting It All Together - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2.12: Time to Write - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 11.3: 20 Most Common Grammar Errors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.1: Wrong Word - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.2: Comma After Introductory Element - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.3: Documentation Common Error - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.4: Pronoun Reference - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.5: Spelling - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.6: Quotation Error - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.7: Unnecessary Comma - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.8: Capitalization - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.9: Missing Word - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.10: Faulty Sentence Structure - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.11: Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.12: Verb Tense Shift - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.13: Missing Comma in Compound Sentence - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.14: Apostrophe Errors - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.15: Run-On Sentences - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.16: Comma Splice - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.17: Pronoun Agreement - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.18: Poorly Integrated Quote - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.19: Hyphens - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.20: Sentence Fragment - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.21: Try It Out - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.22: Putting It All Together - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3.23: Time to Write - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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