

DEVELOPMENTAL STUDIES (101 AND 103)



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Developmental Studies (101 and 103)

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1.1: Speaking The Language of College

original content by Alise Lamoreaux

Getting started in college can seem like an uphill battle. One of the first challenges a student can encounter is navigating the college's website. In the attempt to get as much information as possible into the hands of current and future students, college websites are crammed full of information and language that may be new to the first-time college student. Trying to figure out how to get started can be confusing, even when the website says, "Steps To Enroll." Registration, admission, enrollment... are they all the same thing? If you are registered, are you admitted and enrolled? Is enrollment in the college the same thing as enrollment in classes? And that's just the beginning of the potential for confusion! How can a student know the answers to these questions?

Learning to speak the "language of college" can seem even harder than learning a foreign language because as a new student, you have no idea what words you need to learn. If you travel to a foreign country, there are core vocabulary words you will find most helpful – resources that will allow you to order the food you like and services you need. Basic needs like bread and water can be correlated among different languages. A dog is a dog all over the world and not confused with a cat. However, the vocabulary of college is not so straightforward. Learning to speak the language of the college is part of learning the school's culture. It is important to remember that not all colleges use the same words in the same way.

As a college student, you will need to come up with a strategy for learning lots of information, such as the specific language of your school. Mike Boyd has a video about mastering skills by deconstructing them into simpler tasks. When you **deconstruct** something, it means to take something large, and break it down into smaller parts. It also means to identify why you might fail before you start and make a plan to stop failure before it happens.

- Video: How to Learn Anything Quickly, Mike Boyd (2017)

Directions: View the short video below. Then answer the bullet-point questions below the video link.

YouTube Video

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

[View this YouTube Video online](https://youtu.be/9OysfveZkl4)



Video: How to Learn Anything Quickly. <https://youtu.be/9OysfveZkl4>

- **Based on the ideas of simplifying and deconstructing a task in order to learn it, think of how those ideas could be applied to mastering the language of college.**
 - Can you see any ways to simplify the task of learning 30 words? If so, explain.
 - Are there any connections between the words that you can see? If so, explain.
 - Will you need all the words all the time? Why or why not?
 - Will you need some words more frequently than others? Why or why not?
 - When and where might you need each of the words? Explain.
 - Can you think of any words not included in this list that would be helpful to know in relationship to your college vocabulary? If so, explain.

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Attribution. Adaptions: Reformatted, some content removed to fit a broader audience.

- Mike Boyd: How to Learn Anything Quickly. Authored by youtube.com Located at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OysfveZkl4> License: CC BY – NC – ND 4.0 International.

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1.2: TIME MANAGEMENT AND PROCRASTINATION

1.2.1: Organizing Your Time

1.2.2: Procrastination

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1.2.1: Organizing Your Time

Original Content by Dave Dillon

When you know what you want to do, why not just sit down and get it done? The millions of people who complain frequently about “not having enough time” would love it if it were that simple! Time management isn’t actually difficult, but you do need to learn how to do it well.

Technically, time cannot be managed, but we label it **time management** when we talk about how people use their time. We often bring up efficiency and effectiveness when discussing how people spend their time, but we cannot literally manage time because time cannot be managed. What we can do though, is find better ways to spend our time, allowing us to accomplish our most important tasks and spend time with the people most important to us. Time management for successful college studying involves these factors:

- Determining how much time you need to spend studying.
- Knowing how much time you actually have for studying and increasing that time if needed.
- Being aware of the times of day you are at your best and most focused.
- Using effective long- and short-term study strategies.
- Scheduling study activities in realistic segments.
- Using a system to plan ahead and set priorities.
- Staying motivated to follow your plan and avoid procrastination.

For every hour in the classroom, college students should spend, on average, about two hours on that class, counting reading, studying, writing papers, and so on. If you’re a full-time student with fifteen hours a week in class, then you need another thirty hours for rest of your academic work. That forty-five hours is about the same as a typical full-time job. If you work part time, time management skills are even more essential. These skills are still more important for part-time college students who work full time and commute or have a family. To succeed in college, virtually everyone has to develop effective strategies for dealing with time.

Many students begin college not knowing that two hours of studying for each course they are taking is needed, so don’t be surprised if you underestimated this number of hours also. Remember this is just an average amount of study time—you may need more or less for your own courses. To be safe, and to help ensure your success, add another five to ten hours a week for studying.

To reserve this study time, you may need to adjust how much time you spend in other activities. The Exercise below will help you figure out what your typical week *should* look like.

Time and Your Personality

People’s attitudes toward time vary widely. One person seems to be always rushing around but actually gets less done than another person who seems unconcerned about time and calmly goes about the day. Since there are so many different “**time personalities**,” it’s important to realize how you approach time.

People who estimate too high often feel they don’t have enough time. They may have time anxiety and often feel frustrated. People at the other extreme, who often can’t account for how they use all their time, may have a more relaxed attitude. They may not actually have any more free time, but they may be wasting more time than they want to admit with less important things. Yet they still may complain about how much time they spend studying, as if there’s a shortage of time.

People also differ in how they respond to schedule changes. Some go with the flow and accept changes easily, while others function well only when following a planned schedule and may become upset if that schedule changes. If you do not react well to an unexpected disruption in your schedule, plan extra time for catching up if something throws you off. This is all part of understanding your time personality.

Another aspect of your time personality involves time of day. If you need to concentrate, such as when writing a class paper, are you more alert and focused in the morning, afternoon, or evening? Do you concentrate best when you look forward to a relaxing activity later on, or do you study better when you’ve finished all other activities? Do you function well if you get up early—or stay up late—to accomplish a task? How does that affect the rest of your day or the next day? Understanding this will help you better

plan your study periods.

While you may not be able to change your **“time personality,”** you can learn to manage your time more successfully. The key is to be realistic. The best way to know how you spend your time is to record what you do all day in a time log (see Figure 2.4 “Daily Time Log” below) every day for a week, and then add that up. Every so often, fill in what you have been doing. Do this for a week before adding up the times; then enter the total hours into categories (i.e. chores, work, family, school, social media). You might be surprised that you spend a lot more time than you thought just hanging out with friends—or surfing the Web, playing around on social media, or any of the many other things people do. You might find that you study well early in the morning even though you thought you are a night person, or vice versa. You might learn how long you can continue at a specific task before needing a break.

If you have work and family responsibilities, you may already know where many of your hours go. Although we all wish we had “more time,” the important thing is what we do with the time we have. Time management strategies can help us better use the time we do have by creating a schedule that works for our own time personality.

Figure 2.4 Daily Time Log

AM	PM
5:00	5:00
5:15	5:15
5:30	5:30
5:45	5:45
6:00	6:00
6:15	6:15
6:30	6:30
6:45	6:45
7:00	7:00
7:15	7:15
7:30	7:30
7:45	7:45
8:00	8:00
8:15	8:15
8:30	8:30
8:45	8:45
9:00	9:00
9:15	9:15
9:30	9:30
9:45	9:45
10:00	10:00
10:15	10:15
10:30	10:30
10:45	10:45
11:00	11:00
11:15	11:15
11:30	11:30
11:45	11:45
PM	AM
12:00	12:00
12:15	12:15
12:30	12:30
12:45	12:45
1:00	1:00
1:15	1:15
1:30	1:30
1:45	1:45
2:00	2:00
2:15	2:15
2:30	2:30
2:45	2:45
3:00	3:00
3:15	3:15
3:30	3:30
3:45	3:45
4:00	4:00
4:15	4:15
4:30	4:30
4:45	4:45

Fixed Time vs. Free Time

Sometimes it helps to take a look at your time and divide it into two areas: fixed time and free time. **Fixed time** is time that you have committed to a certain area. It might be school, work, religion, recreation or family. There is no right or wrong to fixed time and everyone’s is different. Some people will naturally have more fixed time than others. **Free time** is just that—it is free. It can be used however you want to use it; it’s time you have available for activities you enjoy. Someone might work 9am-2pm, then have class 3pm-4:30pm, then have dinner with family 5pm-6pm, study 6pm-7pm and then have free time from 7pm-9pm. Take a look at a typical week for yourself. How much fixed time do you have? How much free time? How much fixed and free time would you like to have?

Laura Vanderkam’s TED Talk helps with perspective on free time.

Video: *How to Gain Control of Your Free Time*, Laura Vanderkam TED Talk



https://www.ted.com/talks/laura_vanderkam_how_to_gain_control_of_your_free_time

You must make time for the things that are most important to you. In order to make time, you may need to decide you will not do something else.

The ability to say “no” cannot be underestimated. It isn’t easy to say “no,” especially to family, friends and people that like you and whom you like. Most of us don’t want to say “no,” especially when we want to help. But if we always do what others want, we won’t accomplish the things that we want—the things that are most important to us.

Ask yourself:

- What am I doing that doesn’t need to be done?
- What can I do more efficiently?

Have you ever ordered an appetizer, salad, beverage or bread, then felt full halfway through your entree? In situations like this many people claim, “my eyes were bigger than my stomach.” This is also true with planning and goal setting. It may be that your plan is bigger than the day. Experiment with what you want to accomplish and what is realistic. The better you can accurately predict what you can and will accomplish and how long it will take, the better you can plan, and the more successful you will be.

Typically, most college students do actually have plenty of time for their studies without losing sleep or giving up their social life. But you may have less time for discretionary activities than in the past. *Something, somewhere has to give.* That’s part of time management—and why it’s important to keep your goals and priorities in mind. The other part is to learn how to use the hours you do have as effectively as possible, especially the study hours. For example, if you’re a typical college freshman who plans to study for three hours in an evening but then procrastinates, gets caught up in a conversation, loses time to checking e-mail and text messages, and listens to loud music while reading a textbook, then maybe you actually spent four hours “studying” but got only two hours of actual work done. So you end up behind and feeling like you’re still studying way too much. The goal of time management is to actually get three hours of studying done in three hours and have time for your life as well.

Special note for students who work. You may have almost *no* discretionary time at all left after all your “must-do” activities. If so, you may have overextended yourself—a situation that inevitably will lead to problems. You can’t sleep two hours less every night for the whole school year, for example, without becoming ill or unable to concentrate well on work and school. It is better to recognize this situation now rather than set yourself up for a very difficult term and possible failure. If you cannot cut the number of hours for work or other obligations, see your academic advisor right away. It is better to take fewer classes and succeed than to take more classes than you have time for and risk failure.

Time Management Strategies for Success

Following are some strategies you can begin using immediately to make the most of your time:

- **Prepare to be successful.** When planning ahead for studying, think yourself into the right mood. Focus on the positive. “When I get these chapters read tonight, I’ll be ahead in studying for the next test, and I’ll also have plenty of time tomorrow

to do X.” *Visualize* yourself studying well!

- **Use your best—and most appropriate—time of day.** Different tasks require different mental skills. Some kinds of studying you may be able to start first thing in the morning as you wake, while others need your most alert moments at another time.
- **Break up large projects into small pieces.** Whether it’s writing a paper for class, studying for a final exam, or reading a long assignment or full book, students often feel daunted at the beginning of a large project. It’s easier to get going if you break it up into stages that you schedule at separate times—and then begin with the first section that requires only an hour or two.
- **Do the most important studying first.** When two or more things require your attention, do the more crucial one first. If something happens and you can’t complete everything, you’ll suffer less if the most crucial work is done.
- **If you have trouble getting started, do an easier task first.** Like large tasks, complex or difficult ones can be daunting. If you can’t get going, switch to an easier task you can accomplish quickly. That will give you momentum, and often you feel more confident tackling the difficult task after being successful in the first one.
- **If you’re feeling overwhelmed and stressed because you have too much to do, revisit your time planner.** Sometimes it’s hard to get started if you keep thinking about other things you need to get done. Review your schedule for the next few days and make sure everything important is scheduled, then relax and concentrate on the task at hand.
- **If you’re really floundering, talk to someone.** Maybe you just don’t understand what you should be doing. Talk with your instructor or another student in the class to get back on track.
- **Take a break.** We all need breaks to help us concentrate without becoming fatigued and burned out. As a general rule, a short break every hour or so is effective in helping recharge your study energy. Get up and move around to get your blood flowing, clear your thoughts, and work off stress.
- **Use unscheduled times to work ahead.** You’ve scheduled that hundred pages of reading for later today, but you have the textbook with you as you’re waiting for the bus. Start reading now, or flip through the chapter to get a sense of what you’ll be reading later. Either way, you’ll save time later. You may be amazed how much studying you can get done during downtimes throughout the day.
- **Keep your momentum.** Prevent distractions, such as multitasking, that will only slow you down. Check for messages, for example, only at scheduled break times.
- **Reward yourself.** It’s not easy to sit still for hours of studying. When you successfully complete the task, you should feel good and deserve a small reward. A healthy snack, a quick video game session, or social activity can help you feel even better about your successful use of time.
- **Just say no.** Always tell others nearby when you’re studying, to reduce the chances of being interrupted. Still, interruptions happen, and if you are in a situation where you are frequently interrupted by a family member, spouse, roommate, or friend, it helps to have your “no” prepared in advance: “No, I *really* have to be ready for this test” or “That’s a great idea, but let’s do it tomorrow—I *just can’t* today.” You shouldn’t feel bad about saying no—especially if you told that person in advance that you needed to study.
- **Have a life.** Never schedule your day or week so full of work and study that you have no time at all for yourself, your family and friends, and your larger life.
- **Use a calendar planner and daily to-do list.** We’ll look at these time management tools in the next section.

Time Management Tips for Students Who Work

If you’re both working and taking classes, you seldom have large blocks of free time. Avoid temptations to stay up very late studying, for losing sleep can lead to a downward spiral in performance at both work and school. Instead, try to follow these guidelines:

- **If possible, adjust your work or sleep hours so that you don’t spend your most productive times at work.** If your job offers flex time, arrange your schedule to be free to study at times when you perform best.
- **Try to arrange your class and work schedules to minimize commuting time.** If you are a part-time student taking two classes, taking classes back-to-back two or three days a week uses less time than spreading them out over four or five days. Working four ten-hour days rather than five eight-hour days reduces time lost to travel, getting ready for work, and so on.
- **If you can’t arrange an effective schedule for classes and work, consider online courses that allow you to do most of the work on your own time.**
- **Use your daily and weekly planner conscientiously.** Any time you have thirty minutes or more free, schedule a study activity.
- **Consider your “body clock” when you schedule activities.** Plan easier tasks for those times when you’re often fatigued and reserve alert times for more demanding tasks.
- **Look for any “hidden” time potentials.** Maybe you prefer the thirty-minute drive to work over a forty-five-minute train ride. But if you can read on the train, that’s a gain of ninety minutes every day at the cost of thirty minutes longer travel time. An

hour a day can make a huge difference in your studies.

- **Can you do quick study tasks during slow times at work?** Take your class notes with you and use even five minutes of free time wisely.
- **Remember your long-term goals.** You need to work, but you also want to finish your college program. If you have the opportunity to volunteer for some overtime, consider whether it's really worth it. Sure, the extra money would help, but could the extra time put you at risk for not doing well in your classes?
- **Be as organized on the job as you are academically.** Use your planner and to-do list for work matters, too. The better organized you are at work, the less stress you'll feel—and the more successful you'll be as a student also.
- **If you have a family as well as a job, your time is even more limited.** In addition to the previous tips, try some of the strategies that follow.

Time Management Tips for Students with Family

Living with family members often introduces additional time stresses. You may have family obligations that require careful time management. Use all the strategies described earlier, including family time in your daily plans the same as you would hours spent at work. Don't assume that you'll be "free" every hour you're home, because family events or a family member's need for your assistance may occur at unexpected times. Schedule your important academic work well ahead and in blocks of time you control. See also the earlier suggestions for controlling your space: you may need to use the library or another space to ensure you are not interrupted or distracted during important study times.

Students with their own families are likely to feel time pressures. After all, you can't just tell your partner or kids that you'll see them in a couple years when you're not so busy with job and college! In addition to all the planning and study strategies discussed so far, you also need to manage your family relationships and time spent with family. While there's no magical solution for making more hours in the day, even with this added time pressure there are ways to balance your life well:

- **Talk everything over with your family.** If you're going back to school, your family members may not have realized changes will occur. Don't let them be shocked by sudden household changes. Keep communication lines open so that your partner and children feel they're together with you in this new adventure. Eventually you will need their support.
- **Work to enjoy your time together, whatever you're doing.** You may not have as much time together as previously, but cherish the time you do have—even if it's washing dishes together or cleaning house. If you've been studying for two hours and need a break, spend the next ten minutes with family instead of checking e-mail or watching television. Ultimately, the important thing is *being together*, not going out to movies or dinners or the special things you used to do when you had more time. Look forward to being with family and appreciate every moment you are together, and they will share your attitude.
- **Combine activities to get the most out of time.** Don't let your children watch television or play video games off by themselves while you're cooking dinner, or you may find you have only twenty minutes family time together while eating. Instead, bring the family together in the kitchen and give everyone something to do. You can have a lot of fun together and share the day's experiences, and you won't feel so bad then if you have to go off and study by yourself.
- **Share the load.** Even children who are very young can help with household chores to give you more time. Attitude is everything: try to make it fun, the whole family pulling together—not something they "have" to do and may resent, just because Mom or Dad went back to school. (Remember, your kids will reach college age someday, and you want them to have a good attitude about college.) As they get older, they can do their own laundry, cook meals, and get themselves off to school, and older teens can run errands and do the grocery shopping. They will gain in the process by becoming more responsible and independent.
- **Schedule your study time based on family activities.** If you face interruptions from young children in the early evening, use that time for something simple like reviewing class notes. When you need more quiet time for concentrated reading, wait until they've gone to bed.
- **Be creative with child care.** Usually options are available, possibly involving extended family members, sitters, older siblings, cooperative child care with other adult students, as well as child-care centers. After a certain age, you can take your child along to campus when you attend an evening course, if there is somewhere the child can quietly read. At home, let your child have a friend over to play with. Network with other older students and learn what has worked for them. Explore all possibilities to ensure you have time to meet your college goals. And don't feel guilty: "day care babies" grow up just as healthy psychologically as those raised in the home full time.

Time Management Tips for Student Athletes

Student athletes often face unique time pressures because of the amount of time required for training, practice, and competition. During some parts of the year, athletics may involve as many hours as a full-time job. The athletic schedule can be grueling,

involving weekend travel and intensive blocks of time. You can be exhausted after workouts or competitions, affecting how well you can concentrate on studies thereafter. Students on athletic scholarships often feel their sport is their most important reason for being in college, and this priority can affect their attitudes toward studying. For all of these reasons, student athletes face special time management challenges. Here are some tips for succeeding in both your sport and academics:

- **Realize that even if your sport is more important to you, you risk everything if you don't also succeed in your academics.** Failing one class in your first year won't get you kicked out, but you'll have to make up that class—and you'll end up spending more time on the subject than if you'd studied more to pass it the first time.
- **It's critical to plan ahead.** If you have a big test or a paper due the Monday after a big weekend game, start early. Use your weekly planner to plan well in advance, making it a goal, for example, to have the paper done by Friday—instead of thinking you can magically get it done Sunday night after victory celebrations. Working ahead will also free your mind to focus better on your sport.
- **Accept that you have two priorities—your sport and your classes—and that both come before your social life.** That's just how it is—what you have accepted in your choice to be a college athlete. If it helps, think of your classes as your job; you have to “go to study” the same as others “go to work.”
- **Use your planner to take advantage of any downtime you have during the day between classes and at lunch.** Other students may seem to have the luxury of studying during much of the afternoon when you're at practice, and maybe they can get away with hanging out between classes, but you don't have that time available, at least not during the season. You need to use all the time you can find to keep up with your studying.
- **Stay on top of your courses.** If you allow yourself to start slipping behind, maybe telling yourself you'll have more time later on to catch up, just the opposite will happen. Once you get behind, you'll lose momentum and find it more difficult to understand what's going on in the class. Eventually the stress will affect your athletic performance also.
- **Get help when you need it.** Many athletic departments offer tutoring services or referrals for extra help. But don't wait until you're at risk for failing a class before seeking help. A tutor won't take your test or write your paper for you—they can only help you focus in to use your time productively in your studies. You still have to want to succeed.

Calendar Planners and To-Do Lists

Calendar planners and to-do lists are effective ways to organize your time. Many types of academic planners are commercially available (check your college bookstore), or you can make your own. Some people like a page for each day, and some like a week at a time. Some use computer calendars and planners. Almost any system will work well if you use it consistently.

Some college students think they don't need to actually write down their schedule and daily to-do lists. They've always kept it in their head before, so why write it down in a planner now? Some first-year students were talking about this one day in a study group, and one bragged that she had never had to write down her calendar because she never forgot dates. Another student reminded her how she'd forgotten a pre-registration date and missed taking a course she really wanted because the class was full by the time she went online to register. “Well,” she said, “except for that time, I never forget anything!” Of course, none of us ever forgets anything—until we do.

Calendars and planners help you look ahead and write in important dates and deadlines so you don't forget. But it's just as important to use the planner to schedule *your own time*, not just deadlines. For example, you'll learn later that the most effective way to study for an exam is to study in several short periods over several days. You can easily do this by choosing time slots in your weekly planner over several days that you will commit to studying for this test. You don't need to fill every time slot, or to schedule every single thing that you do, but the more carefully and consistently you use your planner, the more successfully will you manage your time.

But a planner cannot contain every single thing that may occur in a day. We'd go crazy if we tried to schedule every telephone call, every e-mail, every bill to pay, every trip to the grocery store. For these items, we use a to-do list, which may be kept on a separate page in the planner.

Check the example of a weekly planner form in Figure 2.5 “Weekly Planner” below. (You can copy this page and use it to begin your schedule planning. By using this first, you will find out whether these time slots are big enough for you or whether you'd prefer a separate planner page for each day.) Fill in this planner form for next week. First write in all your class meeting times; your work or volunteer schedule; and your usual hours for sleep, family activities, and any other activities at fixed times. Don't forget time needed for transportation, meals, and so on. Your first goal is to find all the blocks of “free time” that are left over.

Remember that this is an **academic planner**. Don't try to schedule in everything in your life—this is to plan ahead to use your study time most effectively.

Next, check the syllabus for each of your courses and write important dates in the planner. If your planner has pages for the whole term, write in all exams and deadlines. Use red ink or a highlighter for these key dates. Write them in the hour slot for the class when the test occurs or when the paper is due, for example. (If you don't yet have a planner large enough for the whole term, use Figure 2.5 "Weekly Planner" and write any deadlines for your second week in the margin to the right. You need to know what's coming *next* week to help schedule how you're studying *this* week.)

Figure 2.5 Weekly Planner

HOURS	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
6-7 AM							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12 PM							
12-1							
1-2							
2-3							
3-4							
4-5							
5-6							
6-7							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12 AM							
12-1							
1-2							
2-3							
3-4							
4-5							
5-6							

Remember that for every hour spent in class, plan an average of two hours studying outside of class. These are the time periods you now want to schedule in your planner. These times change from week to week, with one course requiring more time in one week because of a paper due at the end of the week and a different course requiring more the next week because of a major exam. Make sure you block out enough hours in the week to accomplish what you need to do. As you choose your study times, consider what times of day you are at your best and what times you prefer to use for social or other activities.

Don't try to micro manage your schedule. Don't try to estimate exactly how many minutes you'll need two weeks from today to read a given chapter in a given textbook. Instead, just choose the blocks of time you will use for your studies. Don't yet write in the exact study activity—just reserve the block. Next, look at the major deadlines for projects and exams that you wrote in earlier. Estimate how much time you may need for each and work backward on the schedule from the due date. For example, you have a short paper due on Friday. You determine that you'll spend ten hours total on it, from initial brainstorming and planning through to drafting and revising. Since you have other things also going on that week, you want to get an early start; you might choose to block an hour a week ahead on Saturday morning, to brainstorm your topic, and jot some preliminary notes. Monday evening is a good time to spend two hours on the next step or prewriting activities. Since you have a lot of time open Tuesday afternoon, you decide that's the best time to reserve to write the first draft; you block out three or four hours. You make a note on the schedule to leave time open that afternoon to see your instructor during office hours in case you have any questions on the paper; if not, you'll finish the draft or start revising. Thursday, you schedule a last block of time to revise and polish the final draft due tomorrow.

If you're surprised by this amount of planning, you may be the kind of student who used to think, "The paper's due Friday—I have enough time Thursday afternoon, so I'll write it then." What's wrong with that? First, college work is more demanding than many first-year students realize, and the instructor expects higher-quality work than you can churn out quickly without revising. Second, if you are tired on Thursday because you didn't sleep well Wednesday night, you may be much less productive than you hoped—and without a time buffer, you're forced to turn in a paper that is not your best work.

Figure 2.6 "Example of a Student's Weekly Planner Page with Class Times and Important Study Sessions" shows what one student's schedule looks like for a week. This is intended only to show you one way to block out time—you'll quickly find a way that works best for you.

Figure 2.6 Example of a Student's Weekly Planner Page with Class Times and Important Study Sessions

HOURS	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
6-7 AM							
9-10		Math		Math		Math	
10-11	Exercise??		History		History		
11-12 PM		English lunch	start English paper	English lunch	English lunch	English lunch	
12-1		study App	gym	study App	gym	APP test today	Work
	Work		do math problems		do math problems		
	cat	Work	cat	Work	cat	cat	
	History					movie tonight?	
9-10	Math problems	read English	study for App test	read history	study for App test		Party at JP's
10-11							
11-12 AM							
12-1							

Here are some more tips for successful **schedule planning**:

- **Studying is often most effective immediately after a class meeting.** If your schedule allows, block out appropriate study time after class periods.
- **Be realistic about time when you make your schedule.** If your class runs to four o'clock and it takes you twenty minutes to wrap things up and reach your study location, don't figure you'll have a full hour of study between four o'clock and five o'clock.
- **Don't overdo it.** Few people can study four or five hours nonstop, and scheduling extended time periods like that may just set you up for failure.
- **Schedule social events that occur at set times, but just leave holes in the schedule for other activities.** Enjoy those open times and recharge your energies!
- **Try to schedule some time for exercise at least three days a week.**
- **Plan to use your time between classes wisely.** If three days a week you have the same hour free between two classes, what should you do with those three hours? Maybe you need to eat, walk across campus, or run an errand. But say you have an average forty minutes free at that time on each day. Instead of just frittering the time away, use it to review your notes from the previous class or for the coming class or to read a short assignment. Over the whole term, that forty minutes three times a week adds up to a lot of study time.
- **If a study activity is taking longer than you had scheduled, look ahead and adjust your weekly planner to prevent the stress of feeling behind.**
- **If you maintain your schedule on your computer or smartphone, it's still a good idea to print and carry it with you.** Don't risk losing valuable study time if you're away from the device.
- **If you're not paying close attention to everything in your planner, use a colored highlighter to mark the times blocked out for really important things.**
- **When following your schedule, pay attention to starting and stopping times.** If you planned to start your test review at four o'clock after an hour of reading for a different class, don't let the reading run long and take time away from studying for the test.

Your Daily To-Do List

People use to-do lists in different ways, and you should find what works best for you. As with your planner, consistent use of your to-do list will make it an effective habit.

Some people prefer not to carry their planner everywhere but instead copy the key information for the day onto a to-do list. Using this approach, your daily to-do list starts out with your key scheduled activities and then adds other things you hope to do today.

Some people use their to-do list only for things not on their planner, such as short errands, phone calls or e-mail, and the like. This still includes important things—but they're not scheduled out for specific times.

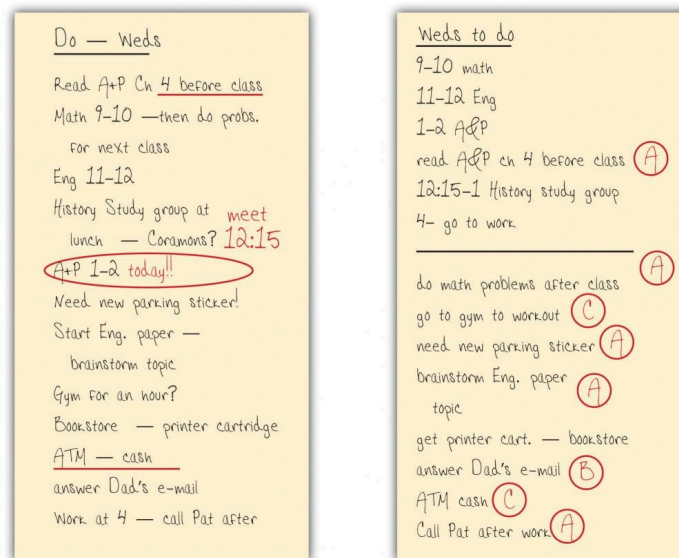
Although we call it a daily list, the to-do list can also include things you may not get to today but don't want to forget about. Keeping these things on the list, even if they're a low priority, helps ensure that eventually you'll get to it.

Start every day with a fresh to-do list written in a special small notebook or on a clean page in your planner. Check your planner for key activities for the day and check yesterday's list for items remaining.

Some items won't require much time, but other activities such as assignments will. Include a time estimate for these so that later you can do them when you have enough free time. If you finish lunch and have twenty-five minutes left before your next class, what things on the list can you do now and check off?

Finally, use some system to prioritize things on your list. Some students use a 1, 2, 3 or A, B, C rating system for importance. Others simply highlight or circle items that are critical to get done today. Figure 2.7 "Examples of Two Different Students' To-Do Lists" shows two different to-do lists—each very different but each effective for the student using it.

Figure 2.7 Examples of Two Different Students' To-Do Lists



Use whatever format works best for you to prioritize or highlight the most important activities.

Here are some more tips for effectively using your daily to-do list:

- **Be specific:** "Read history chapter 2 (30 pages)"—not "History homework."
- **Put important things high on your list where you'll see them every time you check the list.**
- **Make your list at the same time every day so that it becomes a habit.**
- **Don't make your list overwhelming.** If you added *everything* you eventually need to do, you could end up with so many things on the list that you'd never read through them all. If you worry you might forget something, write it in the margin of your planner's page a week or two away.
- **Use your list.** Lists often include little things that may take only a few minutes to do, so check your list any time during the day you have a moment free.
- **Cross out or check off things after you've done them—doing this becomes rewarding.**
- **Don't use your to-do list to procrastinate.** Don't pull it out to find something else you just "have" to do instead of studying!

Identifying, Organizing and Prioritizing Goals

The universal challenge of time is that there are more things that we want to do and not enough time to do them.

I talk to students frequently who have aspirations, dreams, goals and things they want to accomplish. Similarly, I ask students to list their interests at the beginning of each of my classes and there is never a shortage of items. But I often talk to students who are discouraged by the length of time it is taking them to complete a goal (completing their education, reaching their career goal,

buying a home, getting married, etc.). And every semester there are students that drop classes because they have taken on too much or they are unable to keep up with their class work because they have other commitments and interests. There is nothing wrong with other commitments or interests. On the contrary, they may bring joy and fulfillment, but do they get in the way of your educational goal(s)? For instance, if you were to drop a class because you required surgery, needed to take care of a sick family member or your boss increased your work hours, those may be important and valid reasons to do so. If you were to drop a class because you wanted to binge watch *Grey's Anatomy*, play more Minecraft, or spend more time on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, you may have more difficulty justifying that decision, but it is still your decision to make. Sometimes students do not realize the power they have over the decisions they make and how those decisions can affect their ability to accomplish the goals they set for themselves.

I am no exception. I have a long list of things that I want to accomplish today, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year and in my lifetime. I have many more things on my list to complete than the time that I will be alive.

Identifying Goals

Recently, there has been a lot of attention given to the importance of college students identifying their educational objective and their major as soon as possible. Some high schools are working with students to identify these goals earlier. If you are interested in career identification, you may wish to look into a career decision making course offered by your college. You may also wish to make an appointment with a counselor, and/or visit your college's Career Center and/or find a career advice book such as *What Color is Your Parachute?* by Richard N. Bolles.

Goal identification is a way to allow us to keep track of what we would like to accomplish as well as a mechanism to measure how successful we are at achieving our goals. This video gives modern practical advice about the future career market.

Video: *Success in the New Economy*, Kevin Fleming and Brian Y. Marsh, Citrus College:



<https://vimeo.com/67277269>

How To Start Reaching Your Goals

Without goals, we aren't sure what we are trying to accomplish, and there is little way of knowing if we are accomplishing anything. If you already have a goal-setting plan that works well for you, keep it. If you don't have goals, or have difficulty working towards them, I encourage you to try this.

Make a list of all the things you want to accomplish for the next day. Here is a sample to do list:

- Go to grocery store
- Go to class
- Pay bills
- Exercise
- Social media
- Study
- Eat lunch with friend

- Work
- Watch TV
- Text friends

Your list may be similar to this one or it may be completely different. It is yours, so you can make it however you want. Do not be concerned about the length of your list or the number of items on it.

“Obstacles are things a person sees when he takes his eyes off his goal.” – E. Joseph Cossman

You now have the framework for what you want to accomplish the next day. Hang on to that list. We will use it again.

Now take a look at the upcoming week, the next month and the next year. Make a list of what you would like to accomplish in each of those time frames. If you want to go jet skiing, travel to Europe or get a bachelor's degree: Write it down. Pay attention to detail. The more detail within your goals the better. Ask yourself: what is necessary to complete your goals?

With those lists completed, take into consideration how the best goals are created. Commonly called **“SMART” goals**, it is often helpful to apply criteria to your goals. SMART is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. Perform a web search on the Internet to find out more about “SMART” goals. Are your goals SMART goals? For example, a general goal would be, “Achieve an ‘A’ in my anatomy class.” But a specific goal would say, “I will schedule and study for one hour each day at the library from 2pm-3pm for my anatomy class in order to achieve an ‘A’ and help me gain admission to nursing school.”

Now revise your lists for the things you want to accomplish in the next week, month and year by applying the SMART goal techniques. The best goals are usually created over time and through the process of more than one attempt, so spend some time completing this. Do not expect to have “perfect” goals on your first attempt. Also, keep in mind that your goals do not have to be set in stone. They can change. And since over time things will change around you, your goals should also change.

Another important aspect of goal setting is accountability. Someone could have great intentions and set up SMART goals for all of the things they want to accomplish. But if they don't work towards those goals and complete them, they likely won't be successful. It is easy to see if we are accountable in short-term goals. Take the daily to-do list for example. How many of the things that you set out to accomplish, did you accomplish? How many were the most important things on that list? Were you satisfied? Were you successful? Did you learn anything for future planning or time management? Would you do anything differently? The answers to these questions help determine accountability.

Long-term goals are more difficult to create and it is more challenging for us to stay accountable. Think of New Year's Resolutions. Gyms are packed and mass dieting begins in January. By March, many gyms are empty and diets have failed. Why? Because it is easier to crash diet and exercise regularly for short periods of time than it is to make long-term lifestyle and habitual changes.

Randy Pausch was known for his lecture called “The Last Lecture,” now a bestselling book. Diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer, Pausch passes along some of his ideas for best strategies for uses of time in his lesser known lecture on time management. I don't believe there is someone better suited to teach about time management than someone trying to maximize their last year, months, weeks and days of their life.

Organizing Goals

Place all of your goals, plans, projects and ideas in one place. Why? It prevents confusion. We often have more than one thing going on at a time and it may be easy to become distracted and lose sight of one or more of our goals if we cannot easily access them. Create a goal notebook, goal poster, goal computer file—organize it any way you want—just make sure it is organized and that your goals stay in one place.

Break Goals into Small Steps

I ask this question of students in my classes: If we decided today that our goal was to run a marathon and then went out tomorrow and tried to run one, what would happen? Students respond with: (jokingly) “I would die,” or “I couldn't do it.” How come? Because we might need training, running shoes, support, knowledge, experience and confidence—often this cannot be done overnight. But instead of giving up and thinking it's impossible because the task is too big for which to prepare, it's important to develop smaller steps or tasks that can be started and worked on immediately. Once all of the small steps are completed, you'll be on your way to accomplishing your big goals.

What steps would you need to complete the following big goals?

- Buying a house
- Getting married
- Attaining a bachelor's degree
- Destroying the Death Star
- Losing weight

Prioritizing Goals

Why is it important to prioritize? Let's look back at the sample list. If I spent all my time completing the first seven things on the list, but the last three were the most important, then I would not have prioritized very well.

It would have been better to prioritize the list after creating it and then work on the items that are most important first. You might be surprised at how many students fail to prioritize.

After prioritizing, the sample list now looks like this:

- Go to class
- Work
- Study
- Pay bills
- Exercise
- Eat lunch with friend
- Go to grocery store
- Text friends
- Social media
- Watch TV

One way to prioritize is to give each task a value. A = Task related to goals; B = Important—Have to do; C = Could postpone. Then, map out your day so that with the time available to you, work on your A goals first. You'll now see below our list has the ABC labels. You will also notice a few items have changed positions based on their label. Keep in mind that different people will label things different ways because we all have different goals and different things that are important to us. There is no right or wrong here, but it is paramount to know what is important to you, and to know how you will spend the majority of your time with the things that are the most important to you.

A Go to class

A Study

A Exercise

B Work

B Pay bills

B Go to grocery store

C Eat lunch with friend

C Text friends

C Social media

C Watch TV

Do the Most Important Things First

You do not have to be a scientist to realize that spending your time on "C" tasks instead of "A" tasks won't allow you to complete

your goals. The easiest things to do and the ones that take the least amount of time are often what people do first. Checking Facebook or texting might only take a few minutes but doing it prior to studying means we're spending time with a "C" activity before an "A" activity.

People like to check things off that they have done. It feels good. But don't confuse productivity with accomplishment of tasks that aren't important. You could have a long list of things that you completed, but if they aren't important to you, it probably wasn't the best use of your time.

Estimating Task Time

One of the biggest challenges I see college students have is accurately estimating how much time it will take to complete a task. We might think we're going to be able to read an assigned chapter in an hour. But what if it takes three hours to read and understand the chapter? Having the skill to know how long a homework assignment will take is something that can be developed. But until we can anticipate it accurately, it is best to leave some time in our schedule in case it takes longer than we had anticipated.

We have a limited amount of time. Most of us cannot complete everything we wish to complete—either in a day or in a lifetime. We hear people say, "I wish there was more time" or "If there was more time, I would have done this." We have enough time to do many of the things we wish to do. People run into difficulty when they spend time on things that are not the most important things for them.

"There's never enough time to do all the nothing you want." – Bill Watterson

Battling Procrastination

Procrastination is a way of thinking that lets one put off doing something that should be done now. This can happen to anyone at any time. It's like a voice inside your head keeps coming up with these brilliant ideas for things to do right now other than studying: "I really ought to get this room cleaned up before I study" or "I can study anytime, but tonight's the only chance I have to do X." That voice is also very good at rationalizing: "I really don't need to read that chapter now; I'll have plenty of time tomorrow at lunch...."

Procrastination is very powerful. Some people battle it daily, others only occasionally. Most college students procrastinate often, and about half say they need help avoiding procrastination. Procrastination can threaten one's ability to do well on an assignment or test.

People procrastinate for different reasons. Some people are too relaxed in their priorities, seldom worry, and easily put off responsibilities. Others worry constantly, and that stress keeps them from focusing on the task at hand. Some procrastinate because they fear failure; others procrastinate because they fear success or are such perfectionists that they don't want to let themselves down. Some are dreamers. Many different factors are involved, and there are different styles of procrastinating.

Just as there are different causes, there are different possible solutions for procrastination. Different strategies work for different people. The time management strategies described earlier can help you avoid procrastination. Because this is a psychological issue, some additional psychological strategies can also help:

- **Since procrastination is usually a habit, accept that and work on breaking it as you would any other bad habit: one day at a time.** Know that every time you overcome feelings of procrastination, the habit becomes weaker—and eventually you'll have a new habit of being able to start studying right away.
- **Schedule times for studying using a daily or weekly planner.** Carry it with you and look at it often. Just being aware of the time and what you need to do today can help you get organized and stay on track.
- **If you keep thinking of something else you might forget to do later (making you feel like you "must" do it now), write yourself a note about it for later and get it out of your mind.**
- **Counter a negative with a positive.** If you're procrastinating because you're not looking forward to a certain task, try to think of the positive future results of doing the work.
- **Counter a negative with a worse negative.** If thinking about the positive results of completing the task doesn't motivate you to get started, think about what could happen if you keep procrastinating. You'll have to study tomorrow instead of doing something fun you had planned. Or you could fail the test. Some people can jolt themselves right out of procrastination.
- **On the other hand, fear causes procrastination in some people—so don't dwell on the thought of failing.** If you're

studying for a test, and you're so afraid of failing it that you can't focus on studying and you start procrastinating, try to put things in perspective. Even if it's your most difficult class and you don't understand *everything* about the topic, that doesn't mean you'll fail, even if you may not receive an A or a B.

- **Study with a motivated friend.** Form a study group with other students who are motivated and won't procrastinate along with you. You'll learn good habits from them while getting the work done now.
- **Keep a study journal.** At least once a day write an entry about how you have used your time and whether you succeeded with your schedule for the day. If not, identify what factors kept you from doing your work. (Use the form at the end of this chapter.) This journal will help you see your own habits and distractions so that you can avoid things that lead to procrastination.
- **Get help.** If you really can't stay on track with your study schedule, or if you're always putting things off until the last minute, see a college counselor. They have lots of experience with this common student problem and can help you find ways to overcome this habit.

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Adaptions: Reformatted, some content removed to fit a broader audience.

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1.2.2: Procrastination

Contributed by [Dave Dillon](#)

Original Content by Phyllis Nissila



“Do it now” by Maklay62 is in the Public Domain, CC0

Complete the Exercise below to help you solve what is arguably the number one detriment to effective learning at school, home, and/or on the job (aka procrastination).

This personal inventory is a bit different from others you may have taken. It incorporates very little about the usual bad habit suspects when it comes to the “P” word and includes more on the other reasons for such a habit, as suggested in the previous chapter as well as one or two other procrastination-inducers which have cropped up in our now social-media-saturated lives. Perhaps there is, in fact, more to your challenges with procrastination than the assumptions about laziness, disorganization, etc. See what you think. More importantly, see what you can do about it.

EXERCISE 1: Do You Procrastinate?

Directions: For each item, circle one. And feel free to add any comments you wish. Sometimes quick-answer exercises like this just don’t have enough of YOUR personal response options, but try not to over*think things. This is, after all, a simple snapshot of where your beliefs and feelings are at this moment in time.

A. I admit it. Just like everyone else, I feel that I am lazy when it comes to getting my assignments and/or work done.

1. usually
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

B. I am disorganized when it comes to getting my assignments and/or work done.

1. usually
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

C. I get confused about what I am supposed to do for the assignment or task.

1. usually
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

D. I have a hard time saying “no” to others which puts me behind in my work/studies.

1. most of the time
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

E. I have this sinking feeling that I will succumb to the usual reasons for procrastinating, no matter what they are.

1. most of the time
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

F. I just don’t think I have the organizational abilities to be able to stop at least some of my procrastinating.

1. most of the time
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

G. When I was in high school it wasn’t a problem studying for most tests the night before.

1. most of the time
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

H. I work best under pressure, so I think that procrastinating is really good for me.

1. most of the time
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

I. When what I have to study or accomplish is just not that important to me, I find it more tempting to procrastinate.

1. most of the time
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

J. I have a hard time talking myself into maintaining a better attitude about *not* procrastinating.

1. most of the time
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

K. I think I have more time to finish something than I usually do.

1. most of the time
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

L. It annoys me that some instructors assign so much homework when I have a life outside of school, too! So, I believe that it can be their fault that I have to procrastinate on certain things.

1. most of the time
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

M. I am very social and spending time with my friends sometimes gets in the way of doing my work.

1. most of the time
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

N. I can't seem to stay away from social media.

1. most of the time
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. never

O. Here is something (or perhaps more than one) not on this list that also causes me to procrastinate. (Possible issues might include a disability or some kind of learning challenge, homelessness or some other kind of living situation challenge, pregnancy, work hours and responsibilities, and/or personal life stress.)

-
1. most of the time
 2. sometimes
 3. rarely
 4. never

As promised above, let's get started with some immediate solutions as well as some perspectives that might, in time, help you adjust your thoughts and feelings regarding procrastination.

EXERCISE 2: Do You Procrastinate?

Directions: For each of your responses to Exercise 1 above, select your top five challenges when it comes to procrastinating. Create a chart, such as this, but leave yourself ample space to fill in solutions you find:

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Procrastination

"Do or do not - there is no try." - Yoda

Either a homework assignment gets done on time or it doesn't. Over the years I have seen a lot of excuses from students who

didn't complete their assignment on time. **Think about this: If someone were to give you \$500 to complete the assignment on time, would you complete it sooner than you ordinarily would have? What level is your internal motivation? How important is the assignment to you? How important is your grade? How important is your class?**

Procrastination is the act of putting something off. It's doing something that's a low priority instead of doing something that is a high priority. We all procrastinate sometimes. But when we procrastinate on an assignment or studying for an exam until there is little or no time left, our grades suffer and it can be stressful. Learning about why we procrastinate can help us overcome.

Reasons We Procrastinate

- **I don't feel like it.** I would rather play a video game, watch TV, hang out with friends, sleep, etc. than start my assignment. (The problem is – you might never feel like starting it.)
- **Perfectionism.** I want to do it perfectly and there is not enough time to do it perfectly so I am not going to do it at all.
- **Fear of success.** If I study my tail off and I earn an A on an exam, people will start to expect that I will get A's all of the time.
- **Fear of failure.** Without confidence, I can't do the assignment well, no matter how much time or effort I put into it.

"If we are not prepared to fail, we will never create anything original." – Sir Ken Robinson

These reasons have been keeping some students from completing assignments and studying for exams. Do you procrastinate? Why?

Whatever the reason may be, procrastination is not a good idea. It often leads to stress. It can be stressful in trying to complete something if we have left it to the last minute. It can be stressful to know that we didn't submit work that was our best. And stress can take a toll on the health of our bodies.

There are many examples of how American society realizes that people procrastinate. FedEx is built on the fact that people need something immediately and in many cases, they have procrastinated past when regular mail would have gotten it there on time. Post offices stay open later on Tax Day because they know people procrastinated getting their taxes done. Stores offer sales days before Christmas because they know people have procrastinated their Christmas shopping.

So how do we avoid procrastination?

- **Tell yourself to do your best all of the time.** Ask yourself what is important NOW. Other peoples' expectations of you shouldn't matter. Be confident in yourself and in your abilities. Do the best you can and be satisfied with your effort. Realize that we're not perfect. Make your goal to do your best and understand you don't need to be perfect. Also, realize that you may never "feel like" doing an assignment or studying for an exam.
- **Get Started.** It is the hardest part to do and will have the biggest effect on defeating procrastination. It can be simple: skim the chapter you have to read, think of a title for your paper or schedule an hour for when you will study. The rest of it will be easier once you get started.
- **Establish and rely on a process.** Figure out what works best for you. Take some time to make a plan, list, or outline that allows you to see what you will do and when to complete your assignment or goal. It might be setting aside time early in the morning or waiting to watch a movie until after you've finished an assignment. Set your priorities and stick to them.
- **Set Imaginary Deadlines.** If the paper is due in six days, tell yourself it is due in two days. Knock it out early and then enjoy not having it over your head. Fake deadlines are less stressful. And if you do end up needing more time, you have a cushion.
- **Don't Break the Chain.** Jerry Seinfeld developed a system to help prevent procrastination. He wanted to be a better comedian and believed that writing better jokes would help. To write better jokes, he thought he should write every day. His system, called Don't Break the Chain was used to motivate himself to write every day. He started with a big wall calendar with a whole year on a page and a red marker. For each day he wrote, he would place a big red X on that day of the calendar. After a few consecutive days, he had a chain. And then the task became not breaking the chain.

Although originally skeptical, I tried it (with exercise), and found it to work. I liked marking the big red X and I liked seeing a long string of big red X's after a few weeks. I still use this strategy and find myself much more motivated to not break the chain than to go for a run, swim, or to the gym. If there is something you want to practice every day, try it.

"If you eat a frog first thing in the morning, the rest of your day will be wonderful." – Mark Twain

I don't suggest that you go out and eat a frog, but the point Twain makes is paramount to overcoming procrastination. He meant if you have to do something you don't want to, the best thing to do is do it right away: get it over with as soon as possible then move on to enjoy the things you want to do.

This might be true of going to the dentist, making a phone call you don't want to make, or doing your homework.

Tim Urban's Ted Talk shines a light on procrastination.

Video: *Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator*, Tim Urban TED Talk



https://www.ted.com/talks/tim_urban_inside_the_mind_of_a_master_procrastinator

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Adaptions: Removed one exercise, modified an exercise, removed information specific to Lane Community College, opinion article, and some hyperlinks for broader audience purpose.

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Adaptions: Reformatted, some content removed to fit a broader audience.

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1.3: GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR TEXTBOOKS



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- Contributed by [Dave Dillon](#)
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Phyllis Nissila

Reading Textbooks: Front and Back Matter

Before diving into every line of text in a textbook reading assignment, it is helpful—and saves time—to find out, first, what resources the entire book has to offer you. Then, as those chapter readings are assigned, it helps to first skim read them for the big picture meaning.

The first exercise in this chapter will help you find all the resources in your textbook—and some textbooks have a lot more help in the front matter and back matter of the text than you may realize. I always think of one student who, when given this exercise to use on any textbook he had with him, picked his math book. He was at that time re-taking that math class because he had failed it the term before. As he did the exercise, he realized the back matter of the book included an answer key for half of the problems for every exercise. “Had I known this last term,” he said, “I would have passed!” See if you, too, find something useful in your textbook that perhaps you didn’t know was there, either.

The Exercises in this chapter cover strategies for skim reading specific chapters and a strategy for getting the most out of graphics included in textbooks.

Exercise 1: Resource Checklist

Directions: Here is a list of several kinds of resources typically in the front of a textbook, known as “front matter,” and a list of typical “back matter” resources. For one of your textbooks, put a check mark next to the front and back matter features it includes, then answer the two questions, below.

Textbook title_____

FRONT MATTER

___Table of Contents

___Preface

___Introduction

___To the Teacher

___To the Student

___Other (list, here): _____

BACK MATTER

___Glossary of Terms

___Index of subjects

___Answer Keys

___Additional Exercises

___Additional Readings

___Tables, graphs, charts

___Maps

___Other (list, here): _____

Answer the following questions:

1. Were there any surprises for you?
2. How can you use the front and back matter in your text to help you with your studies? (3 or 4 sentences)

Skim Reading Textbook Chapters

Before doing a detailed reading of a textbook chapter, get the big picture by following these steps:

- Similar to reading the Table of Contents for the entire book, read the Introduction or Chapter Overview, whichever the textbook features, for the main ideas and how they are divided.
- Read the headings and sub-headings.
- Note the graphics (charts, tables, illustrations, etc.).
- Read the first one or two sentences in the paragraphs (the paragraph topic is sometimes covered in more than one sentence).
- Read the last sentence in each paragraph which might be a paragraph summary.
- Read the summary of the entire chapter, if given.
- Read any sentence with boldface or italicized words or word groups in it (usually key ideas or technical terms).
- Stop when needed if you come across a complicated idea or topic and take a little more time to skim it until you understand it.
- Skim the study questions, too. They will help you focus on key points.

Exercise 2: Resource Checklist

Directions: Using the recommendations on how to skim through textbook chapters, do so with a textbook chapter of your choice. When you are finished, close the book and write about the following: write down as many of the main ideas of this chapter as you can remember by skim reading it. Try not to look back. When finished, check your work to make sure you have transcribed the information correctly.

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1.3.1: Got Notes?

1.3.2: Preparation for Note-Taking

1.3.3: Taking Notes in Class

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1.3.1: Got Notes?

Everybody takes notes, or at least everybody claims to. But if you take a close look, many who are claiming to take notes on their laptops are actually surfing the Web, and paper notebooks are filled with doodles interrupted by a couple of random words with an asterisk next to them reminding you that “This is important!” In college, these approaches will not work. In college, your instructors expect *you* to make connections between class lectures and reading assignments; they expect *you* to create an opinion about the material presented; they expect *you* to make connections between the material and life beyond college. Your notes are your road maps for these thoughts. Do you take good notes? After learning to listen, note taking is the most important skill to ensure your success in a class.

Effective note taking is important because it:

- supports your listening efforts.
- allows you to test your understanding of the material.
- helps you remember the material better when you write key ideas down.
- gives you a sense of what the instructor thinks is important.
- creates your “ultimate study guide.”

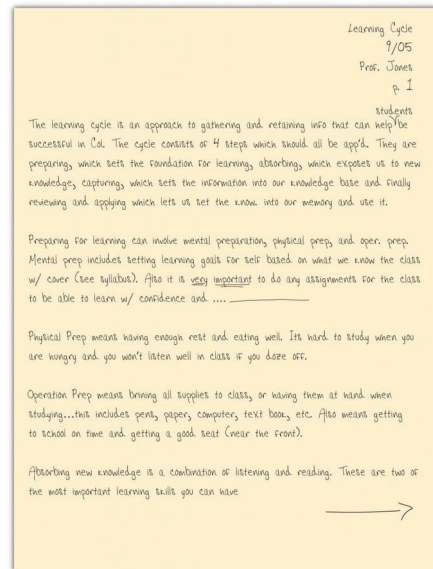
There are various forms of taking notes, and which one you choose depends on both your personal style and the instructor’s approach to the material. Each can be used in a notebook, index cards, or in a digital form on your laptop. No specific type is good for all students and all situations, so we recommend that you develop your own style, but you should also be ready to modify it to fit the needs of a specific class or instructor. To be effective, all of these methods require you to listen actively and to think; merely jotting down words the instructor is saying will be of little use to you.

Table 4.2 Note-Taking Methods

Method	Description	When to Use
Lists	A sequential listing of ideas as they are presented. Lists may be short phrases or complete paragraphs describing ideas in more detail.	This method is what most students use as a fallback if they haven’t learned other methods. This method typically requires a lot of writing, and you may find that you are not keeping up with the professor. It is not easy for students to prioritize ideas in this method.
Outlines	The outline method places most important ideas along the left margin, which are numbered with roman numerals. Supporting ideas to these main concepts are indented and are noted with capital letters. Under each of these ideas, further detail can be added, designated with an Arabic number, a lowercase letter, and so forth.	A good method to use when material presented by the instructor is well organized. Easy to use when taking notes on your computer.
Concept Maps	When designing a concept map, place a central idea in the center of the page and then add lines and new circles in the page for new ideas. Use arrows and lines to connect the various ideas.	Great method to show relationships among ideas. Also good if the instructor tends to hop from one idea to another and back.
Cornell Method	The Cornell method uses a two-column approach. The left column takes up no more than a third of the page and is often referred to as the “cue” or “recall” column. The right column (about two-thirds of the page) is used for taking notes using any of the methods described above or a combination of them. After class or completing the reading, review your notes and write the key ideas and concepts or questions in the left column. You may also include a summary box at the bottom of the page, in which to write a summary of the class or reading in your own words.	The Cornell method can include any of the methods above and provides a useful format for calling out key concepts, prioritizing ideas, and organizing review work. Most colleges recommend using some form of the Cornell method.

The List Method

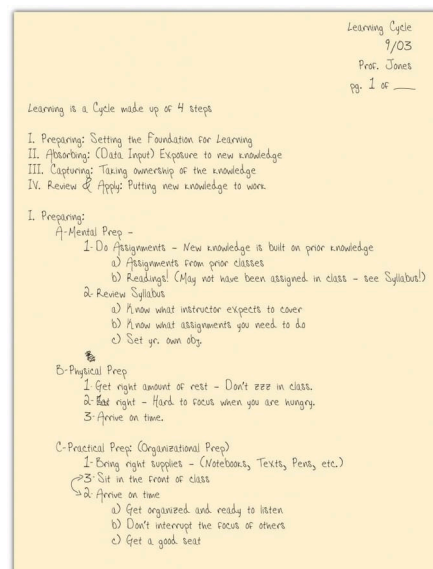
Figure 4.3 The List Method of Note Taking



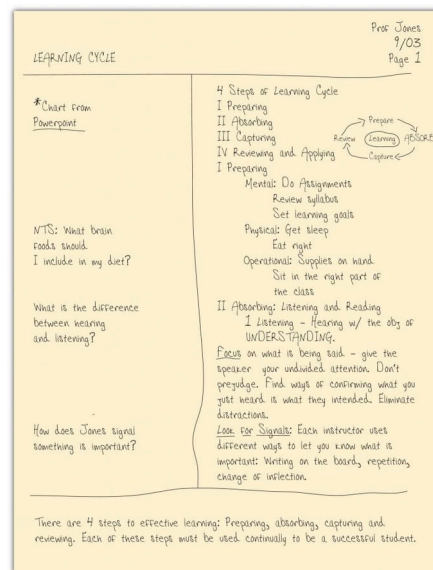
The **list method** is usually not the best choice because it is focused exclusively on capturing as much of what the instructor says as possible, not on processing the information. Most students who have not learned effective study skills use this method, because it's easy to think that this is what note taking is all about. Even if you are skilled in some form of shorthand, you should probably also learn one of the other methods described here, because they are all better at helping you process and remember the material. You may want to take notes in class using the list method, but transcribe your notes to an outline or concept map method after class as a part of your review process. It is always important to review your notes as soon as possible after class and write a summary of the class in your own words.

The Outline Method

Figure 4.4 The Outline Method of Note Taking



The advantage of the **outline method** is that it allows you to prioritize the material. Key ideas are written to the left of the



The **Cornell method** was developed in the 1950s by Professor Walter Pauk at Cornell University. It is recommended by most colleges because of its usefulness and flexibility. This method is simple to use for capturing notes, is helpful for defining priorities, and is a very helpful study tool.

The Cornell method follows a very specific format that consists of four boxes: a header, two columns, and a footer.

The header is a small box across the top of the page. In it you write identification information like the course name and the date of the class. Underneath the header are two columns: a narrow one on the left (no more than one-third of the page) and a wide one on the right. The wide column, called the “notes” column, takes up most of the page and is used to capture your notes using any of the methods outlined earlier. The left column, known as the “cue” or “recall” column, is used to jot down main ideas, keywords, questions, clarifications, and other notes. It should be used both during the class and when reviewing your notes after class. Finally, use the box in the footer to write a summary of the class in your own words. This will help you make sense of your notes in the future and is a valuable tool to aid with recall and studying.

You will have noticed that all methods end with the same step: reviewing your notes as soon as possible after class. Any review of your notes is helpful (reading them, copying them into your computer, or even recasting them using another note-taking method). But THINK! Make your review of notes a thoughtful activity, not a mindless process. When you review your notes, think about questions you still have and determine how you will get the answers. (From the next class? Studying with a friend? Looking up material in your text or on the net?) Examine how the material applies to the course; make connections with notes from other class sessions, with material in your text, and with concepts covered in class discussions. Finally, it’s fun to think about how the material in your notes applies to real life. Consider this both at the very strategic level (as in “What does this material mean to me in relation to what I want to do with my life?”) as well as at a very mundane level (as in “Is there anything cool here I can work into a conversation with my friends?”).

Instructor Handouts

Some instructors hand out or post their notes or their PowerPoint slides from their lectures. These handouts should *never* be considered a substitute for taking notes in class. They are a very useful complement and will help you confirm the accuracy of your notes, but they do not involve you in the process of learning as well as your own notes do. After class, review your notes with highlighter in hand and mark keywords and ideas in your notes. This will help you write the summary of the class in your own words.

General Tips on Note Taking

Regardless of what note-taking method you choose, there are some note-taking habits you should get into for all circumstances and all courses:

1. **Be prepared.** Make sure you have the tools you need to do the job. If you are using a notebook, be sure you have it with you and that you have enough paper. Also be sure to have your pen (as well as a spare) and perhaps a pen with different colored ink to use for emphasis. If you are taking notes on your laptop, make sure the battery is charged! Select the application that lends itself best to your style of note taking. Microsoft Word works very well for outline notes, but you might find taking notes in Excel to work best if you are working within the Cornell method. (It's easier to align your thoughts in the cue or recall column to your notes in the right column. Just be sure you keep one idea per row!)
2. **Write on only one side of the paper.** This will allow you to integrate your reading notes with your class notes.
3. **Label, number, and date all notes at the top of each page.** This will help you keep organized.
4. **When using a laptop, position it such that you can see the instructor and white board right over your screen.** This will keep the instructor in your field of vision even if you have to glance at your screen or keyboard from time to time. Make sure your focus remains with the instructor and not on your laptop. A word of caution about laptops for note taking: use them if you are very adept at keyboarding, but remember that not all note-taking methods work well on laptops because they do not easily allow you to draw diagrams and use special notations (scientific and math formulas, for example).
5. **Don't try to capture everything that is said.** Listen for the big ideas and write them down. Make sure you can recognize the instructor's emphasis cues and write down all ideas and keywords the instructor emphasizes. Listen for clues like "the four causes were..." or "to sum up...."
6. **Copy anything the instructor writes on the board.** It's likely to be important.
7. **Leave space between ideas.** This allows you to add additional notes later (e.g., notes on the answer to a question you or one of your classmates asked).
8. **Use signals and abbreviations.** Which ones you use is up to you, but be consistent so you will know exactly what you mean by "att." when you review your notes. You may find it useful to keep a key to your abbreviations in all your notebooks.
9. **Use some method for identifying your own thoughts and questions to keep them separate from what the instructor or textbook author is saying.** Some students use different color ink; others box or underline their own thoughts. Do whatever works for you.
10. **Create a symbol to use when you fall behind** or get lost in your note taking. Jot down the symbol, leave some space, and focus on what the instructor is covering now. Later you can ask a classmate or the professor to help you fill in what you missed, or you can find it in your textbook.
11. **Review your notes as soon after class as possible (the same day is best).** *This is the secret to making your notes work!* Use the recall column to call out the key ideas and organize facts. Fill in any gaps in your notes and clean up or redraw hastily drawn diagrams.
12. **Write a summary of the main ideas of the class in your own words.** This process is a great aid to recall. Be sure to include any conclusions from the lecture or discussion.

What If You Miss Class?

Clearly the best way to learn class material is to be at the class and to take your own notes. In college, regular attendance is expected. But life happens. On occasion, you may have to miss a class or lecture. When this happens, here are some strategies you can use to make up for it:

- **Check with the instructor to see if there is another section of the class you can attend.** Never ask the instructor "Did I miss anything important?" (Think about what that's saying and you'll see it's rather insulting.)
- **If the instructor posts his or her lectures as a podcast, listen to the lecture online and take notes.** If the instructor uses PowerPoint slides, request a copy (or download them if posted) and review them carefully, jotting down your own notes and questions. Review your notes with a classmate who did attend.
- **You may want to borrow class notes from a classmate.** If you do, don't just copy them and insert them in your notebook. They will not be very helpful. When you borrow notes from a classmate, you should photocopy them and then review them carefully and mark your copy with your own notes and questions. Use your textbook to try to fill in the gaps. Finally, schedule a study session with the person who gave you the notes to review the material and confirm your understanding. (See studying with others in Chapter 6 "Preparing for and Taking Tests".)
- **If none of these options is available for you, use the course syllabus to determine what was covered in the class, then write a short paper (two pages or so) on the material using the class readings and reliable online sources.** See your instructor during office hours to review your key findings and to answer any questions you still may have.

Keeping Your Notes

Class is over, and you have a beautiful set of notes in your spiral notebook or saved in your laptop. You have written the summary of the class in your own words. Now what?

Start by organizing your notes. We recommend you use a three-ring binder for each of your subjects. Print your notes if you used a computer. If you used note cards, insert them in plastic photo holders for binders. Group all notes from a class or unit together in a section; this includes class notes, reading notes, and instructor handouts. You might also want to copy the instructor's syllabus for the unit on the first page of the section.

Next, spend some time linking the information across the various notes. Use the recall column in your notes to link to related information in other notes (e.g., "See class notes date/page").

If you have had a quiz or test on the unit, add it to your binder, too, but be sure to write out the correct answer for any item you missed. Link those corrections to your notes, too.

Use this opportunity to write "notes on your notes." Review your summary to see if it still is valid in light of your notes on the reading and any handouts you may have added to your notes package.

You don't need to become a pack rat with your notes. It is fairly safe to toss them after the end of a course except in the following cases:

1. **If the course you took is a prerequisite for another course, or when the course is part of a standard progression of courses that build upon each other (this is very common in math and science courses), you should keep them as a reference and review for the follow-up course.**
2. **If the course may pertain to your future major, keep your notes.** You may not realize it now that they may have future value when you study similar topics or even the same topics in more depth.
3. **If you are very interested in the course subject and would like to get into the material through a more advanced course, independent study, or even research, keep your notes as a prep tool for further work.**

Exercise 2: Checkpoint

1. Name two advantages of the Cornell system over the list method of note taking.

2. Describe the benefits of—and potential problems with—taking class notes on a laptop.

3. List at least three ways to make up for missing notes because you miss a class.

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1.3.2: Preparation for Note-Taking

Phyllis Nissila

Non-Verbal Communication

When we think about listening we think about, well, hearing sounds via the ears. However, when it comes to listening in order to pick up key points for note-taking, it takes more than just hearing. In this case, it takes a “**critical ear**,” that is, absorbing key points by noticing not only the words spoken, but also by noting tones, volume, and even the body language that goes along. Additionally, being an active listener increases a note-taker’s chances of getting the information needed. Exercise 1 illustrates common non-verbal communication.

EXERCISE 1: Non-Verbal Communication

PART A

Directions: List as many non-verbal, emotional cues as you can by studying the faces in the pictures below.



“Universal Emotions” by Icerko L  dia is licensed under CC BY 3.0

PART B

Directions: The image below illustrates non-verbal body language. Describe a few poses or body movements one or more of your teachers now, or from the past, takes or has taken that communicates: pay closer attention. It might be from these examples, or something quite different. For example, an instructor might move close to the front row and fold his/her arms to indicate that what he or she will be saying is of a more serious nature. For another example, if he or she moves toward the white board to write something, it’s probably key information.



“Men Silhouette” by geralt is in the Public Domain, CC0

Active Listening

Just as there are ways that students can actively engage in the learning process in order to get the most out of their education. There are ways to actively listen as well, in order to get the most out of lectures and, more importantly, take all of the notes that might be required. The video in Exercise 2 covers several active listening strategies along with why we sometimes have difficulty listening.

EXERCISE 2: Active Listening

PART A

Directions: Watch the TED talk below and answer the following questions:

Video: *5 Ways to Listen Better*, Julian Treasure at TED Global 2011



<https://press.rebus.community/blueprint2/?p=126>

1. What 3 types of listening does the speaker discuss?

2. How and why have we been “losing our ability to listen,” as the speaker suggests? He cites 5 ways.
3. What are the 5 tools we can use to listen better?

PART B

Directions: Taking into consideration all of the activities in the exercises above, write a one-page (250-300 words) reflection on how you can use the information on non-verbal and listening skills to enhance both your ability to pay attention to lectures and to take better notes on them.

Perhaps the most useful learning tools of all are notes taken from both lectures and course materials. By annotating for key information, then condensing it, students create personalized summaries helpful for studying.

Often, students are unsure about what constitutes “key information.” Here is a list of items to highlight or annotate for in textbooks and a list of items to listen for in lectures.

Key Information in Textbooks

The following elements of a textbook chapter are especially important in helping you discern key information:

- Introductions
- Summaries
- Study questions
- Topic sentences (as the speaker in the video on “Skim Reading,” exercise 3.2, also in Lesson 3.2 notes: sometimes the reader has to read the first two or even three sentences of a paragraph or section to get the entire main topic).
- Anything that is bolded, or in some other way set off from the default print size and style. Sub-topic titles are good examples of this.
- “Side bars,” which are boxes of related information. These might include statistics, brief biographies of authors or persons of note related to the chapter content, price points on brochures for businesses, charts, graphs, photographs, and/or illustrations. They are typically a different color or in some other way set off for attention but not as the focal point of the text. Pay attention to the captions or legends that might accompany graphics. In this e-text, the exercises are set apart in side bars.
- Glossary terms that may be incorporated in the margins or otherwise set apart.
- Some textbooks include outlines of each chapter’s main points in the introductory section.

Key Information in Lectures

As the lecturer, live or video, presents the material, there are two types of key information cues to be aware of.

NONVERBAL CUES

A speaker will often have unique facial and body nonverbal cues that alert you to several things, as you learn to “read” your professor:

- Stances or movements that alert you to when he/she will shift to a different topic or subtopic.
- Other cues that alert you to when the information is of special significance (including verbal clues, below).

VERBAL CLUES

- Pay attention to when the speaker uses any of the transition clues used in reading comprehension.
- Many speakers also announce when they are adding information or changing topics in various other ways.

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Adaptions: Changed formatting, removed emoticon image, embedded Ted Talk video, slight edits for consistency, combined

Lessons 4.1 and 4.2, retitled chapter.

Julian Treasure: 5 Ways to Listen Better. Authored by TED.com  Located at: https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_5_ways_to_listen_better

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1.3.3: Taking Notes in Class



- Contributed by [Dave Dillon](#)
- Counselor/Professor at [Grossmont College](#)

Dave Dillon

“He listens well who takes notes.” – Dante Alighieri

Take Notes To Remember

If for no other reason, you should take notes during class so that you do not forget valuable and important information. Despite living with incredible search engines on computers and smart phones that give us a plethora of information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, students do not have the ability to access those during exams. Instructors want to know what you know not what Google knows. We’ve become accustomed to searching for information on demand to find what we need when we need it. The consequence is that we don’t often commit information to memory because we know it will be there tomorrow if we wish to search for it again. This causes challenges with preparation for exams as what we’re tested on is in our brain rather than information we can search for. Thus, there is an importance of taking notes. “Note-taking facilitates both recall of factual material and the synthesis and application of new knowledge, particularly when notes are reviewed prior to exams.”^[1]

Hermann Ebbinghaus studied the rate of forgetting and formulated his “forgetting curve” theory. The Ebbinghaus curve shows that after one month, only 20 percent of information is retained after initial memorization. Without review, 47 percent of learned information is lost after only 20 minutes. After one day, 62 percent of learned information is lost without review.

In order to try to retain information long term, we must move it from our short-term memory to our long-term memory. One of the best ways to do that is through repetition. The more we review information, and the sooner we review once we initially learn it, the more reinforced that information is in our long-term memory.

The first step in being able to review is to take notes when you are originally learning the information. Students who do not take notes in class in the first place will not be able to recall all of the information covered in order to best review.

Taking notes during lectures is a skill, just like riding a bike. If you have never taken notes while someone else is speaking before, it’s important to know that you will not be an expert at it right away. It is challenging to listen to someone speak and then make a note about what they said, while at the same time continuing to listen to their next thought.

When learning to ride a bike, everyone is going to fall. With practice and concentration, we gain confidence and improve our skill. The more we practice, the better we get. In his book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell refers to the “10,000-hour rule.” Based on research by Anders Ericsson, the rule states that 10,000 hours of dedicated practice in your particular field will allow for the greatest potential of mastery. I do not expect you to practice taking notes for 10,000 hours, but the point is that practice, just like many things, is necessary to become more skilled^[2].

Some instructors will give you cues to let you know something is important. If you hear or see one of these cues, it’s something you should write down. This might include an instructor saying, “this is important,” or “this will be covered on the exam.” If you notice an instructor giving multiple examples, repeating information or spending a lot of time with one idea, these may be cues.

Writing on the board or presenting a handout or visual information may also be a cue.

There are many different ways to take notes during lectures and I encourage you to find the way that works best for you. Different systems work best for different people. Experiment in different ways to find the most success.

Tips for Taking Notes During the Lecture

- **Arrive early and find a good seat.** Seats in the front and center are best for being able to see and hear information. A seat at the 50-yard line for the Super Bowl is more expensive for a reason: it gives the spectator the greatest experience.
- **Do not try to write down everything the instructor talks about.** It's impossible and inefficient. Instead, try to distinguish between the most important topics and ideas and write those down. This is also a skill that students can improve upon. You may wish to ask your instructor during office hours if you have identified the main topics in your notes, or compare your notes to one of your classmates.
- **Use shorthand and/or abbreviations.** So long as you will be able to decipher what you are writing, the least amount of pen or pencil strokes, the better. It will free you up so you can pay more attention to the lecture and help you be able to determine what is most important.
- **Write down what your instructor writes.** Anything on a dry erase board, chalkboard, overhead projector and in some cases in presentations; these are cues for important information.
- **Leave space to add information to your notes.** You can use this space during or after lectures to elaborate on ideas.
- **Do not write in complete sentences.** Do not worry about spelling or punctuation. Getting the important information, concepts and main ideas is much more important. You can always revise your notes later and correct spelling.
- **Often, the most important information is delivered at the beginning and/or the end of a lecture.** Many students arrive late or pack up their belongings and mentally check out a few minutes before the lecture ends. They are missing out on the opportunity to write down valuable information. Keep taking notes until the lecture is complete.

Review

The most important aspect of reviewing your lecture notes is when your review takes place in relation to when your notes were taken. For maximum efficiency and retention of memory, it's best to review within 20 minutes of when the lecture ends. For this reason, I do not advise students to take back-to-back classes without 30 minutes in between. It is important to have adequate review time and to give your brain a break. Reviewing shortly after the lecture will allow you to best highlight or underline main points as well as fill in any missing portions of your notes. Students who take lecture notes on a Monday and then review them for the first time a week later often have challenges recalling information that help make the notes coherent.

If you wish to go "above and beyond," you may consider discussing your notes in a study group with your classmates, which can give you a different perspective on main points and deepen your understanding of the material. You may also want to make flashcards for yourself with vocabulary terms, formulas, important dates, people, places, etc. Online flash cards are another option. Students can make them for free and test themselves online or on their phone.

The Big Picture

Keep in mind that students who know what their instructor is going to lecture on before the lecture are at an advantage. Why? Because the more they understand about what the instructor will be talking about, the easier it is to take notes. How? Take a look at the syllabus before the lecture. It won't take much time but it can make a world of difference. You will also be more prepared and be able to see important connections if you read your assigned reading before the lecture. It's not easy to do, but students that do it will be rewarded. If I have read information assigned before the lecture and know what the lecture will be about, I have best prepared myself for taking notes during the lecture and given myself the greatest potential for understanding relationships between the reading material and the lecture.

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1. Deborah DeZure, Matthew Kaplan, and Martha A. Deerman, "Research on Student Notetaking: Implications for Faculty and Graduate Student Instructors," 2001, http://www.math.lsa.umich.edu/~krasn...th156_crlt.pdf. ↵
2. Anders Ericsson et al., "The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance," *Psychological Review*, (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1993), 393-394. ↵

1.4: SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

Much of being successful has to do with planning, setting goals, and putting forth hard work. This section of *Successful Students* will identify ways to do just that and will allow students to personalize these methods.

1.4.1: Concentration and Distraction

1.4.2: Let's Talk about Success

1.4.3: Setting Yourself Up for Success

1.4.1: Concentration and Distraction

original content by Dave Dillon

concentration. n. exclusive attention to one object.

– dictionary.com

Where To Study

In order to study successfully, students must learn to concentrate at a high level. It is important to know where we study best. Some students study well at home. Other students study well at a library or coffee shop. There is no best for all. Your best environment is based on you and your preferences.

Directions: Watch this selective attention test video and see if you come up with the correct answer.

Video: *Selective Attention Test*, Daniel Simmons



https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=14&v=vJG698U2Mvo

When To Study

It is also important to know when we study best. Many students are most efficient studying in the morning when they are fresh. Studying late in the day may be the only option for some students but often we are tired at the end of the day, and this can have a major effect on study efficiency. Figuring out where and when we study best may take some time. And even when we find the best place and time to study, we also have to be aware of distractions, which can be internal or external.

Internal Distractions

An **internal distraction** includes thought processes, self-esteem, or confidence. It's something that interrupts you from what you're doing. It might also be a computer or cell phone – something that is controlled by you. Many students intend to study but easily get distracted with surfing the Internet, checking social media, watching YouTube videos, or receiving a text message. If you don't absolutely need your computer or cell phone for your study, it is my suggestion to not bring them or turn them off. If you do study with your phone or computer, it is best to have all potential alerts turned off. Notifications of text messages, emails, or social media updates all can serve as a major distraction to your studying.

External Distractions

External distractions might be your roommates, family or friends. Even if they are supportive of your study, it may be challenging to concentrate when they are around. Saying “no” is an important skill that may need to be utilized in order for you to have your study time without interruption.

Keep in mind that it may take 20 minutes to reach a high level of concentration. When we are interrupted, it takes on average another 23 minutes to get back to the level of concentration that we were at prior to the disruption.^[1] If a student is studying for an hour and is interrupted twice, the consequence to study efficiency is devastating.

One way to try to monitor how many interruptions you incur and how well you maintain your level of concentration is to keep track of it. Take a blank piece of paper when you are studying and mark down each time you were interrupted.

Over time, with practice, you should be able to decrease the number of interruptions you incur. This will allow you to be most efficient when studying.

Multitasking

Millennials are considered extraordinary multitaskers, though brain science tells us that multitasking is a myth^[2]. More likely, they are apt to switch tasks quickly enough to appear to be doing them simultaneously. When it comes to heavy media multitasking, studies show greater vulnerability to interference, leading to decreased performance^[3].

My classes have had lively discussions on multitasking. Most of the time, I am able to convince students that multitasking is not a good idea for them. (There are always a few stubborn hold outs). Trying to do multiple things at the same time may seem like it may allow you to accomplish more but when studying it often leads to accomplishing less. There are things that I think can be successfully multitasked. I could throw clothes in the washer and make a snack, then eat and read a book at the same time while waiting for the clothes to be washed. But if I try to text, check e-mail, watch TV and look at my Twitter timeline all while studying, it won't work well.

A study from Carnegie Mellon University found that driving while listening to a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent^[4]. Why would anyone choose to use less brain activity when they study?

EXERCISE 1: What's Your Distraction?

Directions: Below is a list of common distractions for college students. Rank these distractions on a scale of 0 to 5, with 5 being an extreme distraction. There are even two blank rows for you to fill in other distractions that may not be listed below.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
1. Phone or other electronic devices (television, computer, tablet, etc.)						
2. Other people around you						
3. Worrying about work, school, family/personal issues						
4. Tiredness/Lack of energy						
5. Hunger						

	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. Lack of interest in the subject or task						
7. Stress/feeling overwhelmed						
8. Noise						
9. Room lighting						
10. Room temperature						
11. (other)						
12. (other)						

created by Laura Gilbert

EXERCISE 2: Let's Minimize Your Distractions

Directions: Choose your top three distractions from the exercise above and conduct an Internet search to find articles to help minimize those top three distractions. List those distractions and potential solutions below.

Distractions	Potential Solutions
1.	
2.	
3.	

created by Laura Gilbert

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Selective Attention Test. Authored by: Daniel Simmon. Located at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo>. License: All Rights Reserved. License Terms: Standard YouTube license.

1. Gloria Mark, Daniela Gudith, and Ulrich Kiocke, "The Cost of Interrupted Work: More Speed and Stress," 2008, <https://www.ics.uci.edu/~gmark/chi08-mark.pdf>. ↵
2. Jim Taylor, "Technology: Myth of Multitasking," 2011, Psychology Today, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/...h-multitasking>. ↵
3. Eyal Ophir, Clifford Nass, and Anthony D. Wagner, "Cognitive Control in Media Multitaskers," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 2009, <http://www.pnas.org/content/106/37/15583.full>. ↵
4. Byron Spice, Timothy Keller, and Jacquelyn Cynkar, "Carnegie Mellon Study Shows Just Listening To Cell Phones Significantly Impairs Drivers," (Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon, 2008). ↵

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1.4.2: Let's Talk about Success

Success in college is a central theme of this book. Let's first define what success really means so that you can get started, right now, on the right foot.

Understand first that no book can “make” you be successful—it can only offer the tools for you to use if you want. What are you thinking right now as you read these words? Are you reading this right now only because you *have* to, because it is an assigned reading in a course you have to take—and your mind keeps drifting to other things because you're feeling bored? Or are you interested because you've decided you *want* to succeed in college?

Hopefully it's the latter, that you're feeling motivated—and excited, too—to do a great job in college. But even if you aren't much concerned at present about these issues, we hope you'll keep reading and do some thinking about why you're in college and how to get motivated to do well.

“Success” and “Failure”

So what does “success” actually mean in college? Good grades? That's what many students would say—at least toward the beginning of their time in college.

When you ask people about their college experience a few years later, grades are seldom one of the first things mentioned. College graduates reflecting back typically emphasize the following:

- The complete college experience (often described as “the best years of my life”).
- Exploring many different subjects and discovering one's own interests.
- Meeting a lot of interesting people, learning about different ways to live.
- Learning how to make decisions and solve problems that are now related to a career.
- Gaining the skills needed to get the job—and life—one desires.

When you are achieving what you want in life and when you are happy and challenged and feel you are living life to its fullest and contributing to the world, then you likely feel successful. When you reach this point, your grades in college are about the last thing you'll think of.

This is not to say that grades don't matter—just that getting good grades is not the ultimate goal of college or the best way to define personal success while in college. Five or ten years from now, no one is going to care much about what grade you got in freshman English or Biology 101. A successful college experience does include acceptable grades, of course, but in the end—in your long-range goals—grades are only one component of a larger picture.

EXERCISE 1: Define Success

Directions: Determine **your** definition of success in college. Identify at least three steps you would need to take in order to achieve **your** definition of success in college.

created by Laura Gilbert

How Much Do Grades Matter?

As you begin your college experience, it's useful to think about your attitude toward grades, since grades often motivate students to study and do well on assignments.

Valuing grades too highly, or not highly enough, can cause problems. A student who is determined to get only the highest grades can easily be frustrated by difficult college classes. Expectations that are too high may lead to disappointment—possibly depression or anxiety—and may become counterproductive. At the other extreme, a student who is too relaxed about grades, who is content simply with passing courses, may not be motivated to study enough even to pass—and may be at risk for failing courses.

What is an acceptable attitude to have toward grades? The answer to that depends in part on how grades do matter generally—and specifically in your own situation. Here are some ways grades clearly do matter:

- At most colleges, all students must maintain a certain grade point average (GPA) to be allowed to continue taking courses and to graduate.
- Financial aid and scholarship recipients must maintain a certain grade in all courses, or a minimum GPA overall, to continue receiving their financial award.
- In some programs, the grade in certain courses must be higher than simply passing in order to count toward the program or major.

After graduation, it may be enough in some careers just to have completed the program or degree. But in most situations, how well one did in college may still affect one's life. Employers often ask how well you did in college (new graduates at least—this becomes less important after one has gained more job experience). Students who are proud of their grades usually include their GPA on their résumés. Students with a low GPA may avoid including it on their résumé, but employers may ask on the company's application form or in an interview (and being caught in a lie can lead to being fired). An employer who asks for a college transcript will see all of your grades, not just the overall GPA.

In addition to the importance of jobs, grades matter if you plan to continue to graduate school, professional school, or other educational programs—all of which require your transcript.

Certainly grades are not the only way people are judged, but along with all forms of experience (work, volunteer, internship, hobbies), personal qualities, and the recommendations of others, they are an important consideration. After all, an employer may think, if this person goofed off so much in college that he got low grades, how can I expect him not to goof off on the job?

How to Calculate Your GPA

Because of various requirements for maintaining a GPA at a certain level, you may need to know how to calculate your GPA before grades come out at the end of the term. The math is not difficult, but you need to consider both the grade in every course and the number of credit hours for that course in order to calculate the overall GPA. Here is how you would do the calculation in the traditional four-point scale. **First, translate each letter grade to a numerical score:**

A = 4
B = 3
C = 2
D = 1

Then multiply each grade's numerical score by the number of units or hours for that course:

B in Math 101 $3 \times 5 \text{ hours} = 15$
B in English 4 $3 \times 3 = 9$
C in Humanities 1 $2 \times 5 = 10$
A in College Success $4 \times 3 = 12$

Then add together those numbers for each course:

$15 + 9 + 10 + 12 = 46$.

Then divide that total by the total number of credit hours:

$46 / 16 = 2.87 = \text{GPA of } 2.87$.

****Consult your college's policies regarding the numeric weighting of + and – grades.**

The best attitude to take toward grades in college is simply to do the best you can do. You don't need to over-extend yourself, but if you're not going to make an effort then there's not much reason to be there in the first place.

If you have special concerns about grades, such as feeling unprepared in certain classes and at risk of failing, talk with your

academic advisor. If a class requires more preparation than you have from past courses and experience, you might be urged to drop that class and take another—or to seek extra help. Your advisor can help you work through any individual issues related to doing well and getting the best grade you can.

EXERCISE 2: Why are You Here?

Directions: Describe at least three reasons why you've made the decision to attend college. What is it that you hope to accomplish while you are attending college?

created by Laura Gilbert

Succeeding in Your First Year

The first year of college is almost every student's most crucial time. Statistics show a much higher drop-out rate in the first year than thereafter. Why? Because for many students, adjusting to college is not easy. Students wrestle with managing their time, their freedom, and their other commitments to family, friends, and work. It's important to recognize that it may not be easy for you.

On the other hand, when you do succeed in your first year, the odds are very good that you'll continue to succeed and will complete your program or degree. Motivation and a positive attitude are the keys to getting off to a running start. The next section lists some things you can do to start right now, today, to ensure your success.

Getting Started on the Right Foot Right Now

- Make an appointment to talk with your academic advisor if you have any doubt about the courses you have already enrolled in or about the direction you're taking. Start examining how you spend your time and ensure you make enough time to keep up with your courses.
- Check for tutoring assistance if you feel you may need it and make an appointment or schedule time to visit tutoring centers on your college campus to see what help you can get if needed.
- Like yourself. You've come a long way to reach this point, you have succeeded in taking this first step toward meeting your college goal, and you are fully capable of succeeding the rest of the way. Avoid the trap of feeling down on yourself if you're struggling with any classes.
- Pay attention to your learning style and your instructors' teaching styles. Begin immediately applying the guidelines discussed earlier for situations in which you do not feel you are learning effectively.
- Plan ahead. Check your syllabus for each class and highlight the dates of major assignments and tests. Write on your calendar the important dates coming up.
- Look around your classroom and plan to introduce yourself right away to one or two other students. Talking with other students is the first step in forming study groups that will help you succeed.
- Introduce yourself to your instructors, if you haven't already. In a large lecture, go up to the instructor after class and ask a question about anything in the lecture or about an upcoming assignment.
- Participate in your classes. If you're normally a quiet person who prefers to observe others asking questions or joining class discussions, you need to take the first step toward becoming a participating student—another characteristic of the successful student. Find something of particular interest to you and write down a question for the instructor. Then raise your hand at the right time and ask. You'll find it a lot easier than you may think!
- Vow to pay more attention to how you spend your money. Some students have to drop out because they get into debt.
- Take good care of your body. Good health makes you a better student. Vow to avoid junk food, to get enough sleep, and to move around more. When you're done reading this chapter, take a walk!

Excellent! Start doing these few things, and already you'll be a step or two ahead—and on your way to a successful first year!

EXERCISE 3: Be Proactive

Directions: Choose at least three items from the bullet point list above and follow-through in completing those three items within the first two weeks of class. Choose at least three more items to complete once you are finished completing your first three. Continue until you have completed all or most of the items on the list.

created by Laura Gilbert

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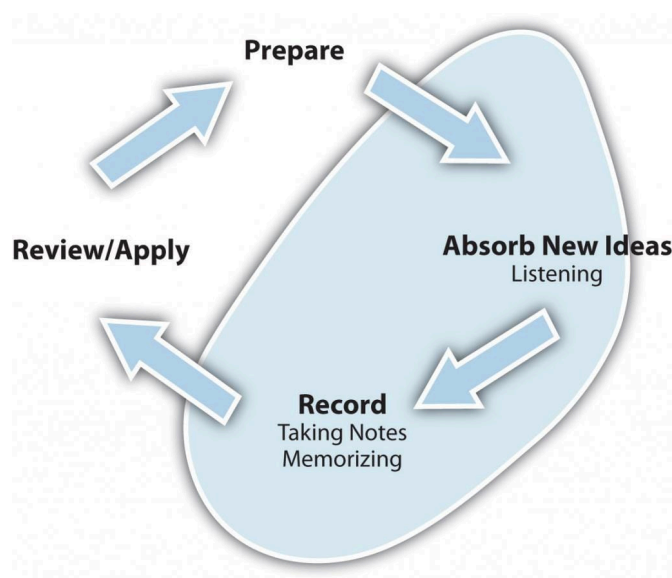
1.4.3: Setting Yourself Up for Success

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

Most students simply have not learned how to study and don't understand how learning works. Learning is actually a cycle of four steps: preparing, absorbing, capturing, and reviewing. When you get in the habit of paying attention to this cycle, it becomes relatively easy to study well. But you must use all four steps.

Effective listening skills make you a better note taker, and taking strong notes can help you listen better. Both are key study skills to help you do better in your classes.

Figure 4.2 The Learning Cycle



Key Takeaways

[Edit section](#)

- College is very different from high school.
- You must take personal responsibility for your learning.
- Time management is crucial.
- Learning is a cycle of four steps: preparing, absorbing, capturing, and reviewing.

It's About Time: Attendance and “Presence”

In elementary school, children are reminded to “stay on task” and focus on classroom activities. But college students often need to remind themselves of this as well—to maintain focus and develop the set of skills needed to help them find success in college and achieve their dreams.

College students are expected to demonstrate independence, responsibility, and relationship-building skills. While elementary-school students are dropped off and picked up from school by adults, college students are now the adults and are on their own. Adults make decisions about being early or on time to classes and meetings; balancing the shifting priorities of home life, work life, and school life; and reaching their destinations even when their cars won't start.

For college freshmen, whatever their age, the first year in college is a big transition and a learning experience in itself. Many students find themselves unable to catch up after missing even a single class. Class time is learning time.

In every class session, instructors cover course content, and students are invited (and expected) to think about the information, take notes, and participate in class discussions. Instructors, regardless of the level and subject they teach, want their students to learn things of value and that extend beyond the classroom and grade into the professional and the wider world. Most instructors put concerted and contemplative time and effort into what will become their teaching time, so they expect students to be in class to gain all they can.

However, sometimes students are absent when unforeseen events and challenges occur. So from the very first day of a student's college career, the student needs to be courageous and conscientious, to contact instructors and proactively notify them in advance of every absence, to express regret, and to show a commitment to moving forward. This is particularly critical if colleges use an automatic drop or withdrawal system that cancels students' registration if they are absent for two straight weeks.

Whether via email, phone call, text, or even in person, students should notify all their instructors about any potential missed day of class. Regardless of the notification method, **students shouldn't ask what they missed**. For example, in the email text below, line 3 is a faux pas.

1 Good afternoon, Professor McKenna.

2 I had a family emergency today and was unable to make it to campus.

3 Did I miss anything important? If so, is there a time I could meet with you?

4 I look forward to your response.

5 Josh McDonald

6 English 100, Section 006, Tuesday & Thursday, 3:00 p.m.–4:15 p.m.

7 Cell: 777-123-4567

Students can be certain that “something important” was definitely covered that day in class and that it's not the instructor's responsibility to teach it twice; however, reaching out with a politely worded email shows interest and responsibility on the student's part.

Absences and Connecting to Help Each Other Recover Time Lost

It's the student's responsibility to connect with the class community and find out what she or he missed. Early in the semester, students should make acquaintance with at least one classmate, exchange contact information, and agree to share important information with each other if one is absent. It's important. Whenever students are absent for any amount of time in class, they have lost important instructional time and content.

Attending and being fully present involves making a commitment of time. Students and instructors also commit to each other—students to students, students to instructors, and instructors to students. Class is time for mutual respect, thoughtfulness, and kindness. Students should aim to build a sense of community and belonging. They should enter the classroom each day with a positive outlook. It's not always easy; sometimes it's nearly impossible. But when things are difficult, a community cares for its members. All colleges are communities filled with people and programs to help students get the assistance and guidance they need.

Absences, Deadlines, Tardies, Leaving Early

Within some academic programs or courses, even one absence may result in failing the course. In general, college students must be aware of the attendance policies (i.e., policies regarding absences, tardies, and “leaving early”) indicated within each course syllabus and the college or university catalog. Double-check the syllabus for each course every semester of college. Students who know they will be absent should always contact instructors ahead of time (i.e., a month, a week, a day, or an hour before class), depending on the policies..

A missed class does not necessarily change a due date for an assignment. Students should read the course syllabus and know their instructor's policies for absences and late work. For example, if a student misses three classes without any reasonable explanations, notifications, or formal paperwork, what happens to the overall course grade? Students should know the answer after the first day of class.

Tardiness is equivalent to absence. Critically important activities often happen during the first few minutes of class, including the taking of attendance. Some instructors will count all tardies as absences and/or deduct points for each tardy.

Leaving early is the same thing as being absent. Some students mistakenly assume that “arriving” means “attending” class and that it's okay to leave class early at any time. It's not okay. Even when students think their instructors don't notice students leaving, instructors and assistants pay attention. Students not present in class could likely miss out on essential course content. However, leaving a class early may be acceptable in extenuating circumstances if a student requests permission and if the instructor approves.

Speaking of “presence,” students must be physically, psychologically, and intellectually present in class each period to learn everything they possibly can.

Don't Let Electronic Devices Steal Time and Attendance

The student scrolling through websites unrelated to class content or completing homework for another course isn't completely present nor attending to task. Such students sometimes fail their courses because it's hard to truly learn without listening.; active learning occurs through note taking and participating in class discussion—and it is helpful to turn off devices that distract and steal attention. If information about cell phones and other devices isn't in the syllabus, ask or take cues from the instructor and from other students during the first couple of days of class.

Some instructors weave the use of electronic devices into their lessons through response and polling programs, which allow students to use their devices to participate in discussions. In addition, many instructors allow and encourage the use of laptops and tablets in class, when appropriate. However, not all instructors and situations allow devices, and some instructors deduct points for cell phone use during class, so students should know the instructor's preference.

Time Communicating and Attending to Email and Learning Management Systems

Before the semester begins, students would do well to familiarize themselves with their campus email system and respective **learning management system (LMS)**, which is an electronic system to inform students of class assignments, grades, and announcements related to courses, along with allowing students to post assignments, communicate with instructors and/or classmates, and much more. Instructors and students use their campus LMS in a variety of ways and it's important for students to ask questions about how instructors will use the LMS and how they wish to be contacted.

The Syllabus: Words to Live By

Syllabi created for college-level courses are likely to be much longer than students have previously encountered. A course syllabus is a multiple-page document that instructors provide to students during the first few days of class. If one stays enrolled in a course, both student and instructor are expected to follow the syllabus, which usually provides the following critically important information:

- Course number, title, schedule, and final exam date and time
- Instructor's name, contact information, and office hours
- Learning Outcomes/Objectives (LOs) or goals (sometimes called Student Learning Outcomes [SLOs] or Program Learning Outcomes [PLOs], which vary amongst college and universities): Students should highlight these and keep them in mind as a checklist of goals they should meet, concepts they should learn, and skills they should demonstrate over the semester and certainly by the end of the course.
- Required materials (e.g., books, email access, computer access)
- General course tasks
- Course assignments (e.g., homework) and assessments (e.g., quizzes, exams), including formatting of written work
- Daily and/or weekly class schedule

- General course policies (e.g., attendance and participation, academic integrity, grading and late work, and suggested study times per week)
- Campus-wide support services (e.g., a writing center, learning assistance center, counseling center, health clinic, Title IX support center, and LGBTQ+ support center)
- College and university policies, rules, and guidelines

Students should read each syllabus on the first day they receive it so they are clear about all that will be expected of them for the rest of the semester.

Managing Time

It often seems the older people get, the busier their lives become. These days, increasingly more students can't complete a degree without also having to work at least one job. Add family needs into the mix, and it becomes a situation in which time can seem difficult to manage, and responsibilities in life can feel overwhelming. "Overwhelming," in fact, is a word college students often use. College is interesting, fun, exciting, and full of new ideas, and exists as a path to fulfill students' dreams, but it requires time, attention, and energy.

To feel empowered and in control of one's life, students need to proactively manage their time and life—instead of just letting life happen to them. It helps to be clear about expectations, to plan ahead, to stay organized, to anticipate any complications, and to create a schedule that works. It helps to use a planner to organize one's time. Many students benefit from creating a weekly hourly plan. Organizational strategies help maintain control over time.

Staying Organized

Some people seem more organized than others. Regardless, everyone can use strategies that work to make sure that important documents are not misplaced and that the correct essay is emailed to the correct instructor. Students should organize all their syllabi and class materials, keep up with their planners or calendars, maintain checklists of assignments and due dates, schedule study and meeting times between classes and work (i.e., actively and weekly), eat healthfully, plan for self-care (i.e., body, spirit, and mind, including sufficient sleep). Studies increasingly show the importance of sleep to a strong body, mind, and spirit, all of which affect students' ability to succeed.

Using today's technology makes staying organized easy; that's what it's there for. Calendars and software applications on cellphones can be synchronized with other devices. Online calendars can email reminders and ping cell phones so nothing is forgotten or missed.

Making Appointments with Instructors and Keeping Them

Meeting with instructors helps students obtain or process content that is significant for getting the most out of a course, but they also demonstrate a student's interest in the content and commitment to doing well in the class. Students should prepare questions beforehand and be prepared to take notes on anything the instructor offers that seems especially poignant or helpful.

If an appointment is missed, an apology is surely due. But it's important to remember that everyone misses a meeting now and then, and all one can do is apologize and try not to miss a second one.

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2: READING ENGAGEMENT

2.1: Active Reading and Annotating

2.1.1: Annotate and Take Notes

2.1.2: Reading Textbooks

2.1.3: Read Effectively

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2.2: Reading Strategies

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2.1: ACTIVE READING AND ANNOTATING

2.1.1: Annotate and Take Notes

2.1.2: Reading Textbooks

2.1.3: Read Effectively

2.1.4: Read Efficiently

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2.1.1: Annotate and Take Notes

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

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

If you can't write on the text itself, you can accomplish almost the same thing by taking notes—either by hand (on paper) or e-notes. You might also choose to use sticky notes to capture your ideas—these can be stuck to specific pages for later recall.

Many students use brightly-colored highlighting pens to mark up texts. These are better than nothing, but in truth, they're not much help. Using them creates big swaths of eye-popping color in your text, but when you later go back to them, you may not remember why they were highlighted. To avoid this, create a consistent system for using each color (i.e. all items in blue refer to definitions, all items in orange refer to main ideas). Writing in the text with a simple pen or pencil is always preferable.

tip

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

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

When you read and take notes, use the [text coding strategy](#). **Text coding (Annotating)** is a way of tracking your thinking while reading. It entails marking the text and recording what you are thinking either in the margins or perhaps on Post-it notes. As you make connections and ask questions in response to what you read, you monitor your comprehension and enhance your long-term understanding of the material.

With text coding, mark important arguments and key facts. Indicate where you agree and disagree or have further questions. You don't necessarily need to read every word, but make sure you understand the concepts or the intentions behind what is written. Feel free to develop your own shorthand style when reading or taking notes. The following are a few options to consider using while coding text.

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

Shorthand	Meaning
≠	Disagree
(Insert your own symbol)	(Identify a meaning for your symbol)
(Insert your own symbol)	(Identify a meaning for your symbol)
(Insert your own symbol)	(Identify a meaning for your symbol)
(Insert your own symbol)	(Identify a meaning for your symbol)

See more text coding from [PBWorks](#) and [Smekens Education](#).

This video provides a demonstration of annotation in action.

YouTube Video

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

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



As you annotate, focus on some or all of the following:

- **Definitions.** Look up and write down definitions of unfamiliar words.
- **Concepts.** Underline what you think are the most important, interesting, or difficult concepts.
- **Tone.** Note the writer's tone—sarcastic, sincere, witty, shrill.
- **Biases.** Look out for the writer's biases and unstated assumptions (and your own).
- **Responses.** Ask questions and note your own reactions and insights.
- **Connections.** Make connections with other texts you have read or your own experiences.

EXERCISE 1: Check Your Understanding: Annotation

[Edit section](#)

Directions: Print a hard copy* of a *New York Times* article of your choice. Pre-read the article to gather some first impression ideas. Then read the article completely, annotating as you go.

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

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

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2.1.2: Reading Textbooks

- Contributed by [Dave Dillon](#)
- Counselor/Professor at [Grossmont College](#)

Dave Dillon

“There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate’s loot on Treasure Island.” – Walt Disney

Practice

If you want to be a better swimmer, you practice. If you want to be a better magician, you practice. If you want to be a better reader, you practice. I encourage you to read. Read, read, read. Read newspapers. Read magazines. Read books. Use your library card (get one if you don’t have one). Read blogs. Read tweets. Read Wikipedia articles. Read about history, politics, world leaders, current events, sports, art, music—whatever interests you. Why? Because the more you read, the better reader you become. And because the more you read, the more knowledge you will have. That is an important piece in learning and understanding. When we are learning new information, it’s easier to learn if we have some kind of background knowledge about it.

Background Knowledge

In their book, *Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning Across the Curriculum*, Vacca and Vacca postulate that a student’s prior knowledge is “the single most important resource in learning with texts.”^[1]

Reading and learning are processes that work together. Students draw on prior knowledge and experiences to make sense of new information. “Research shows that if learners have advanced knowledge of how the information they’re about to learn is organized — if they see how the parts relate to the whole before they attempt to start learning the specifics — they’re better able to comprehend and retain the material.”^[2]

For example, you are studying astronomy and the lecture is about Mars. Students with knowledge of what Mars looks like, or how it compares in size to other planets or any information about Mars will help students digest new information and connect it to prior knowledge. The more you read, the more background knowledge you have, and the better you will be able to connect information and learn. “Content overlap between text and knowledge appears to be a necessary condition for learning from text.”^[3]

There are a lot of recent advances in technology that have made information more accessible to us. Use this resource! If you are going to read a chemistry textbook, experiment with listening or watching a podcast or a YouTube video on the subject you are studying. Ask your instructor if they recommend specific websites for further understanding.

“The greatest gift is a passion for reading. It is cheap, it consoles, it distracts, it excites, it gives you the knowledge of the world and experience of a wide kind. It is a moral illumination.” – Elizabeth Hardwick

The Seven Reading Principles

1. **Read the assigned material.** I know this sounds like a no-brainer, but you might be surprised to learn how many students don’t read the assigned material. Often, it takes longer to read the material than had been anticipated. Sometimes it is not interesting material to us and we procrastinate reading it. Sometimes we’re busy and it is just not a priority. It makes it difficult to learn the information your instructor wants you to learn if you do not read about it before coming to class.
2. **Read it when assigned.** This is almost as big of a problem for students as the first principle. You will benefit exponentially from reading assignments when they are assigned (which usually means reading them before the instructor lectures on them). If there is a date for a reading on your syllabus, finish reading it before that date. The background knowledge you will attain from reading the information will help you learn and connect information when your instructor lectures on it, and it will leave you better prepared for class discussions. Further, if your instructor assigns you 70 pages to read by next week, don’t wait until the night before to read it all. Break it down into chunks. Try scheduling time each day to read 10 or so pages. It takes discipline and self-control but doing it this way will make understanding and remembering what you read much easier.

3. **Take notes when you read.** You may recall Hermann Ebbinghaus' research from a previous chapter. He determined that 42% of information we take in is lost after only 20 minutes without review. For the same reasons that it's important to take notes during lectures, it's important to take notes when you are reading. Your notes will help you concentrate, remember and review.
4. **Relate the information to you.** We remember information that we deem is important. The strategy then is to make what you are studying important to you. Find a way to directly relate what you are studying to something in your life. Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is not. But if your attitude is "I will never use this information" and "it's not important," chances are good that you will not remember it.
5. **Read with a dictionary or use an online dictionary.** Especially with information that is new to us, we may not always recognize all the words in a textbook or their meanings. If you read without a dictionary and you don't know what a word means, you probably still won't know what it means when you finish reading. Students who read with a dictionary (or who look the word up online) expand their vocabulary and have a better understanding of the text. Take the time to look up words you do not know. Another strategy is to try to determine definitions of unknown words by context, thus eliminating the interruption to look up words.
6. **Ask a classmate or instructor when you have questions or if there are concepts you do not understand.** Visiting an instructor's office hours is one of the most underutilized college resources. I think some students are shy about going, and I understand that, but ultimately, it's your experience, and it's up to you if you want to make the most of it. If you go, you will get answers to your questions; at the same time, you'll demonstrate to your instructor that their course is important to you. Find out when your professor's office hours are (they are often listed in the syllabus), ask before or after class or e-mail your professor to find out. Be polite and respectful.
7. **Read it again.** Some students will benefit from reading the material a second or third time as it allows them to better understand the material. The students who understand the material the best usually score the highest on exams. It may be especially helpful to reread the chapter just after the instructor has lectured on it.

Strategies To Think About When You Open Your Textbook

Preview: Look at what you are reading and how it is connected with other areas of the class. How does it connect with the lecture? How does it connect with the course description? How does it connect with the syllabus or with a specific assignment? What piece of the puzzle are you looking at and how does it fit into the whole picture? If your textbook has a chapter summary, reading it first may help you preview and understand what you are going to be reading.

Headings and designated words: Pay close attention to section headings and subheadings, and boldface, underlined or italicized words and sentences. There is a reason why these are different than regular text. The author feels they are more important and so should you.

Highlighting: Highlighting is not recommended because there is not evidence supporting it helps students with reading comprehension or higher test scores.^[4]

Pace: One of the biggest challenges I see students have with reading is accurately assessing how long it will take to read what is assigned. In many cases, it's important to break the information up in chunks rather than to try and read it all at once. If you procrastinate and leave it until the day before it needs to be read, and then find out it will take you longer than you anticipate, it causes problems. One strategy that works well for many students is to break the information up equally per day and adjust accordingly if it takes longer than you had thought. Accurately estimating how much time it will take to practice the seven reading principles applied to your reading assignments is a skill that takes practice.

"Drink Deeply from Good Books" – John Wooden

It's Not All Equal

Keep in mind that the best students develop reading skills that are different for different subjects. The main question you want to ask yourself is: Who are you reading for? And what are the questions that drive the discipline? We read different things for different purposes. Reading texts, blogs, leisure books and textbooks are all different experiences, and we read them with different mindsets and different strategies. The same is true for textbooks in different areas. Reading a mathematics textbook is going to be different than reading a history textbook, a psychology textbook, a Spanish textbook or a criminal justice textbook. Further, students may be assigned to read scientific journals or academic articles often housed in college libraries' online databases. Scholarly articles require a different kind of reading and librarians are a resource for how to find and read this kind of information. Applying the principles in this chapter will help with your reading comprehension, but it's important to remember that you will

need to develop specific reading skills most helpful to the particular subject you are studying.

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1. Richard T. Vacca and Jo Anne L. Vacca, *Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum*, 6th ed. (Menlo Park, CA: Longman, 1999). ↵
2. Joe Cuseo, Viki Fecas and Aaron Thompson, *Thriving in College AND Beyond: Research-Based Strategies for Academic Success and Personal Development*, (Dubuque, IA: Kendal Hunt Publishing, 2010), 115. ↵
3. W. Kintsch, "Text Comprehension, Memory, and Learning," *American Psychologist* 49 no. 4 (1994): 294-303, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.49.4.294>. ↵
4. Lucy Cui, "MythBusters: Highlighting Helps Me Study," *Psychology in Action*, accessed April 27, 2018, <https://www.psychologyinaction.org/p...helps-me-study>. ↵

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2.1.3: Read Effectively



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Good writing begins with good reading. Every time you read, you’re exposed to someone else’s ideas and to their way of writing: their word choice, vocabulary, knowledge base, use of language, and so forth.

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

First, read every day. And vary the materials you read: a book, a magazine article, an online blog, etc. Try readings things that are a little challenging. In other words, don’t just vary the subject matter—vary the difficulty, too. Stretch!

Second, learn and practice the skills of effective reading (which are explained below in this section).

Third, keep reading. Every day. And use good effective reading skills.

Fourth, learn and practice the skill of reading critically. To learn more, see [Reading Critically](#) in the “Writing about Texts” section.

Fifth, keep reading. Yes, every day, putting your skills to work. (Practice makes perfect!)

Sixth, well, you know.

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

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

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

- **They work to discover the central meaning of the piece.** They ask themselves:
 - What is the author's point?
 - What is the text trying to say?
 - What story is the author telling?
 - How does the author create and build this meaning?
- **They reflect on what the text means to them, internalizing the meaning:**
 - How am I responding to this text?
 - Why am I responding that way?
 - What does the text make me think about?
 - What does this information mean to me?

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2.1.4: Read Efficiently

To read efficiently, consider the following:

- **Sit down** (in your ideal setting and at your ideal time, if possible) and prepare to read.
 - Do whatever you need to do to minimize distractions during your reading session. (This may include putting your smartphone and other technology in another room.)
 - Have paper and pencil available to take notes.
- **Read carefully, stopping and rereading sections you don't quite understand.**
- **Be sure to look up words you're not familiar with.**
 - This is important! Most of us are good contextual readers; that is, we can usually figure out what an unfamiliar word means based on the content around it. But in your academic, college-level writing, every word is important, and some words carry enough power to change the meaning of a sentence or to launch it into a whole new level of detail.
 - Also, some words have different meanings in the academic setting than in our more casual everyday lives. When you hit a word you don't know, stop, make a note in the margin (or on a piece of paper), and look it up.
 - If you find that stopping to look up individual words is too distracting, you can make a list of all the unknown words you run into and then look them all up when you've finished reading.
- **Keep reading until you're done.**
 - Don't be distracted.
 - If you begin to feel fidgety, stop, get up, and take a five minute break. Then get back to your reading.

The more you read, the stronger your habit will grow, and the easier reading will be.

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2.2: READING STRATEGIES

2.2.1: Discover What a Text is Trying to Say

2.2.2: Explore the Ways the Text Affects You

2.2.3: Exploring the Structure of a Text

2.2.4: Reading Critically

2.2.5: Reflect

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2.2.7: Troubleshoot Your Reading

2.2.8: Use Pre-reading Strategies

2.2.1: Discover What a Text is Trying to Say

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

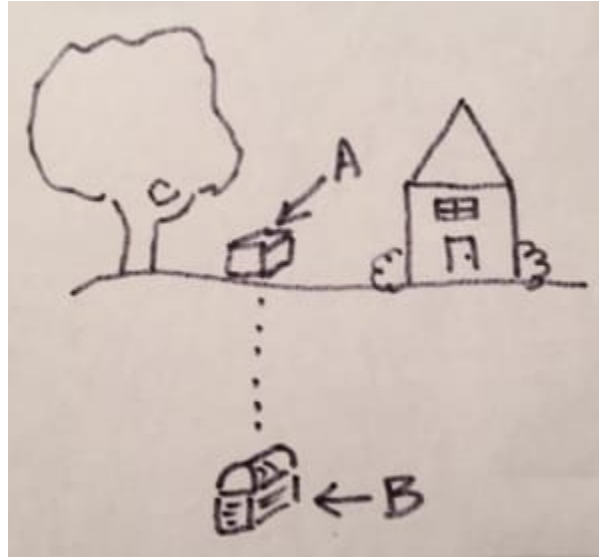


Figure 1 - Hidden Meaning

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

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

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

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

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

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

As you read, always look for both surface meanings and those buried beneath the surface, like treasure. That’s the fun part of reading—finding those precious hidden bits, waiting to be uncovered and eager to make your reading experience richer and

deeper. Even if you just scratch the surface, you'll learn more.

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2.2.2: Explore the Ways the Text Affects You

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

As you explore a text, be aware of how you're responding to it. Consider the following questions when exploring a text:

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

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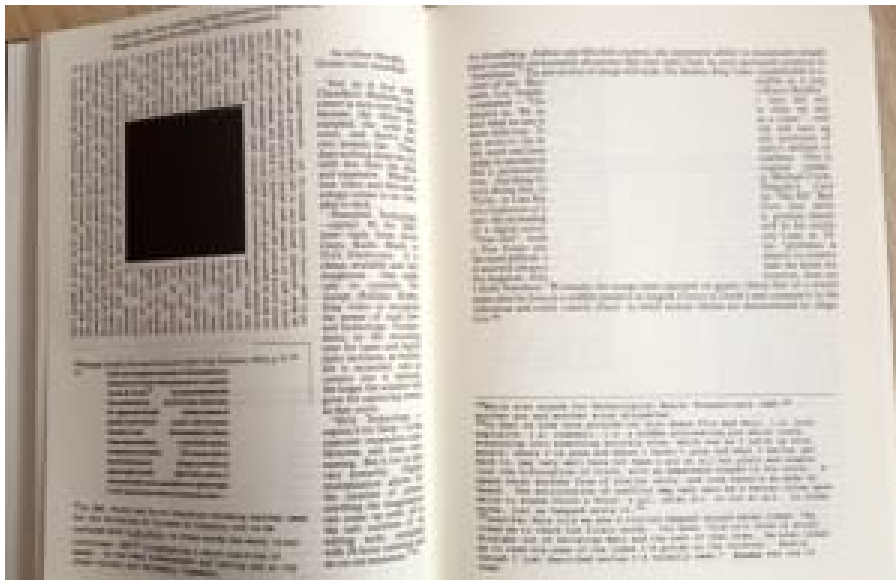
2.2.3: Exploring the Structure of a Text

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

Consider these questions when thinking about structure:

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

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



Figure

- Pages from Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*

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

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2.2.4: Reading Critically



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

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

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

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

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2.2.5: Reflect



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

Here are two ideas for post-reading reflection:

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

Exercise 1

Directions: First, find a newspaper article of your choice. Next, write a minute paper (see description above) by jotting down a few sentences in response to something you learned or discovered while reading the article.

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2.2.6: SQ3R

Months after he was born, in 1948, Ron McCallum became blind. In this charming, moving talk, he shows how he is able to read — and celebrates the progression of clever tools and adaptive computer technologies that make it possible.

YouTube Video

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

[View this YouTube Video online](https://youtu.be/QoTSdOkjEVs)



<https://youtu.be/QoTSdOkjEVs>

While most of us don't have the same issues with accessing reading material that McCallum does, many of us can benefit from some of the same strategies he uses.

This section focuses on strategies to make reading a more meaningful process. Some of these strategies incorporate technology, while others just rely on a set of practices that become stronger over time.

Scanning

[Edit section](#)

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



Figure

Scanning is used to find a particular piece of information. Run your eyes over the text looking for the specific piece of information

you need. If you see words or phrases that you don't understand, don't worry when scanning.

Scanning is what you do to find an answer to a specific question. You may run your eyes quickly down the page in a zigzag or winding S pattern. If you are looking for a name, you note capital letters. For a date, you look for numbers. Vocabulary words may be boldfaced or italicized. When you scan for information, you read only what is needed.

Rhetorical Context

[Edit section](#)

We're used to the idea of learning things from what we read. It's important to realize that we can learn a bit by looking at factors that are **outside** of a text, as well.

[\(Author, audience, purpose\) Rhetorical Context](#) from [Lumen Learning](#)

Skimming

[Edit section](#)



Figure

Skimming is used to quickly gather the most important information, or “gist.” Run your eyes over the text, noting important information. Use skimming to quickly get up to speed on a current business situation. It's not essential to understand each word when skimming.

Skimming is covering the chapter to get some of the main ideas and a general overview of the material. It is what you do first when reading a chapter assignment. You don't read for details at this point.

Here is how you skim a chapter:

1. Read the first paragraph of the chapter line by line.
2. Next, read all the bold print headings starting at the beginning.
3. Read the first sentence of every paragraph.
4. Study any pictures, graphs, charts, and maps.
5. Finally, read the last paragraph of the chapter.

As you skim, you could write down the main ideas and develop a chapter outline.

SQ3R

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SQ3R is a useful technique for understanding written information. It helps you to create a good mental framework of a subject, into which you can fit the right facts. It helps you to set study goals and prompts you to use review techniques that will help you to remember.

The acronym **SQ3R** stands for the five sequential techniques you should use to read a book: **S**urvey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite and **R**evue.

Phase	Description
Survey (S)	Scan the entire assignment to get an overview of the material. Read the headings to see the major points. Read the introductory paragraphs and the summary at the end of the chapter. Do not forget to look at the tables, pictures, etc. Remember, you are scanning the material and not actually reading every sentence.
Question (Q)	Make questions that can be answered during the reading of the material. This will give a purpose to your reading. Take a heading and turn it into a question. For example, if a heading in a chapter about Cell Division is in your biology text, make a question by turning the title around: "How does cell division occur?" or "How many steps are involved in cell division?"
Read (R)	Now you read the material trying to find answers to your questions. This is a careful reading, line by line. You may want to take notes or make flashcards.
Recite (R)	As you read, look away from your book and notes and try to answer your questions. This checks your learning and helps put that information in your memory.
Review (R)	To check your memory, scan portions of the material or your notes to verify your answers. Review the material and note the main points under each heading. This review step helps you retain the material.

What SQ3R Looks Like

[Edit section](#)

This video demonstrates the SQ3R process in action.

YouTube Video

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

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



High-5 Reading Strategies

[Edit section](#)

Click through following presentation to learn about a 5-step process for deeper reading comprehension and retention.

[High 5! reading comprehension strategies](#) from [Pilgrim Library](#)

Self-Check

[Edit section](#)

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2.2.7: Troubleshoot Your Reading

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

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

Suggestions: That’s a problem, for sure. I always suggest to students that rather than trying to do a bunch of reading at once, they try to do a little bit every day. That makes it easier.

If you’re stuck up against a deadline with no reading done, one suggestion is to do some good pre-reading. That should at least give you the idea of the main topic.

Another idea is to divide the total pages assigned by the number of available days, figuring out how many pages you’ll need to read each day to finish the assignment. Sometimes approaching the text in smaller pieces like this can make it feel more doable. Also, once you figure out how long it takes you to read, say, five pages, you can predict how much time it will take to read a larger section.

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

Suggestions: Not understanding reading can be frustrating—and it can make it hard to succeed on your assignments. The best suggestion is to talk with your teacher. Let them know you don’t understand the reading, and they should be able to help.

Another suggestion is to read sentence by sentence. Be sure you understand each word—if you don’t, look them up. As you read, master each sentence before going on to the next one, and then, at the end of a paragraph, stop and summarize the entire paragraph, reflecting on what you just read.

Yet another idea: use the Web and do a search for the title of the reading followed by the word ‘analysis.’ Reading what other people have said about the text may help you get past your stuck points. If you’re in a face-to-face classroom, asking a question in class will encourage discussion and will also help your fellow students, who may have the same confusions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Suggestions: Two thoughts. One, the more you read, the easier it gets: like anything, reading improves with practice. And two, you’ll probably find your reading is most effective if you try to do a little bit every day rather than several hours of reading all at

one time. Plan ahead! Be aware of what you need to read and divide it up among the available days. Reading 100 pages in a week may seem overwhelming, but reading 15 pages a day will be easier. Be sure to read when you're fresh, too, rather than at day's end, when you're exhausted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Reflect on Your Own Reading Practices

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

Consider how the possible suggestions might work for you.

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

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2.2.8: Use Pre-reading Strategies



Figure

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

Start by Reading and Considering the Title

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Look at the author's name** Have you heard of the author? Do you know anything about them? Sometimes you'll find a short bio about the author at the beginning or end of a text. You can always Google them to look for more details. Ideally, the author should be an acknowledged expert on the subject or should have degrees, training, or credentials that make them an expert. (Learn more about the CRAP method for evaluating sources in the information literacy section titled "Finding Quality Texts.")
- **Skim through the article, looking for headings or "pull-outs"** (content that is pulled off to one side or highlighted in a box). Headings, if present, will often give you clues as to the text's content as well as showing you how the subject has been

divided into sections.

- **Look for any images: photographs, charts, graphs, maps, or other illustrations.** Images—and their captions—will often give you valuable information about the topic.
- **If working with an e-text, you may also find embedded web links.** Follow these: they'll often lead you to resources that will help you better understand the article.
- **Here's a seriously expert level suggestion:** most academic texts and essays follow a fairly similar structure—including beginning every paragraph with a strong, focused topic sentence—you can often get a quick summary or understanding of a written text by simply reading the first sentence in every paragraph. Some authors may use the second sentence as their topic sentence, and if you notice this pattern, reading all of the second sentences in each paragraph will help you follow the text.

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Practicing Your Pre-reading Skills

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

Find the *Scientific American* article, "[U.S. Cracking Down on Brain-Training Games](#)."

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

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2.3: Critical Thinking



Figure

Consider these thoughts about the critical thinking process, and how it applies not just to our school lives but also our personal and professional lives.

“THINKING CRITICALLY AND CREATIVELY”

[Edit section](#)

Critical thinking skills are perhaps the most fundamental skills involved in making judgments and solving problems. You use them every day, and you can continue improving them.

The ability to think critically about a matter—to analyze a question, situation, or problem down to its most basic parts—is what helps us evaluate the accuracy and truthfulness of statements, claims, and information we read and hear. It is the sharp knife that, when honed, separates fact from fiction, honesty from lies, and the accurate from the misleading. We all use this skill to one degree or another almost every day. For example, we use critical thinking every day as we consider the latest consumer products and why one particular product is the best among its peers. Is it a quality product because a celebrity endorses it? Because a lot of other people may have used it? Because it is made by one company versus another? Or perhaps because it is made in one country or another? These are questions representative of critical thinking.

The academic setting demands more of us in terms of critical thinking than everyday life. It demands that we evaluate information and analyze myriad issues. It is the environment where our critical thinking skills can be the difference between success and failure. In this environment we must consider information in an analytical, critical manner. We must ask questions—What is the source of this information? Is this source an expert one and what makes it so? Are there multiple perspectives to consider on an issue? Do multiple sources agree or disagree on an issue? Does quality research substantiate information or opinion? Do I have any personal biases that may affect my consideration of this information?

It is only through purposeful, frequent, intentional questioning such as this that we can sharpen our critical thinking skills and improve as students, learners and researchers.

—Dr. Andrew Robert Baker, *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*

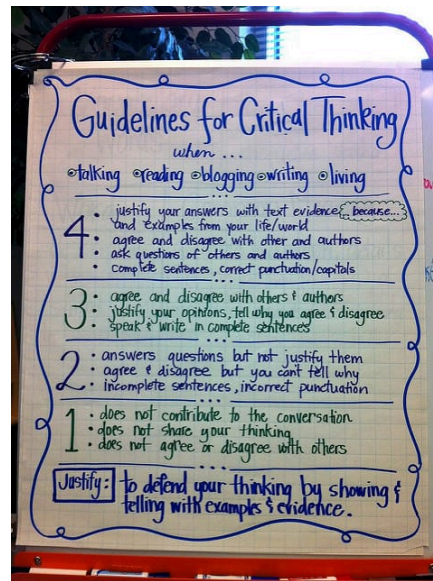
Defining Critical Thinking

[Edit section](#)

Thinking comes naturally. You don't have to make it happen—it just does. But you can make it happen in different ways. For example, you can think positively or negatively. You can think with “heart” and you can think with rational judgment. You can also think strategically and analytically, and mathematically and scientifically. These are a few of multiple ways in which the mind can process thought.

What are some forms of thinking you use? When do you use them, and why?

As a college student, you are tasked with engaging and expanding your thinking skills. One of the most important of these skills is critical thinking. Critical thinking is important because it relates to nearly all tasks, situations, topics, careers, environments, challenges, and opportunities. It's not restricted to a particular subject area.



Figure

Critical thinking is clear, reasonable, reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do. It means asking probing questions like, “How do we know?” or “Is this true in every case or just in this instance?” It involves being skeptical and challenging assumptions, rather than simply memorizing facts or blindly accepting what you hear or read.

Imagine, for example, that you're reading a history textbook. You wonder who wrote it and why, because you detect certain assumptions in the writing. You find that the author has a limited scope of research focused only on a particular group within a population. In this case, your critical thinking reveals that there are “other sides to the story.”

Who are critical thinkers, and what characteristics do they have in common? Critical thinkers are usually curious and reflective people. They like to explore and probe new areas and seek knowledge, clarification, and new solutions. They ask pertinent questions, evaluate statements and arguments, and they distinguish between facts and opinion. They are also willing to examine their own beliefs, possessing a manner of humility that allows them to admit lack of knowledge or understanding when needed. They are open to changing their mind. Perhaps most of all, they actively enjoy learning, and seeking new knowledge is a lifelong pursuit.

This may well be you!

No matter where you are on the road to being a critical thinker, you can always more fully develop your skills. Doing so will help you develop more balanced arguments, express yourself clearly, read critically, and absorb important information efficiently. Critical thinking skills will help you in any profession or any circumstance of life, from science to art to business to teaching.

Critical Thinking IS	Critical Thinking is NOT
Skepticism	Memorizing
Examining assumptions	Group thinking
Challenging reasoning	Blind acceptance of authority
Uncovering biases	

Critical Thinking in Action

[Edit section](#)

The following video, from Lawrence Bland, presents the major concepts and benefits of critical thinking.

YouTube Video

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Critical Thinking and Logic

[Edit section](#)

Critical thinking is fundamentally a process of questioning information and data. You may question the information you read in a textbook, or you may question what a politician or a professor or a classmate says. You can also question a commonly-held belief or a new idea. With critical thinking, anything and everything is subject to question and examination.

Logic's Relationship to Critical Thinking

[Edit section](#)

The word **logic** comes from the Ancient Greek *logike*, referring to the science or art of reasoning. Using logic, a person evaluates arguments and strives to distinguish between good and bad reasoning, or between truth and falsehood. Using logic, you can evaluate ideas or claims people make, make good decisions, and form sound beliefs about the world.^[1]

Questions of Logic in Critical Thinking

[Edit section](#)

Let's use a simple example of applying logic to a critical-thinking situation. In this hypothetical scenario, a man has a PhD in political science, and he works as a professor at a local college. His wife works at the college, too. They have three young children in the local school system, and their family is well known in the community.

The man is now running for political office. Are his credentials and experience sufficient for entering public office? Will he be effective in the political office? Some voters might believe that his personal life and current job, on the surface, suggest he will do well in the position, and they will vote for him.

In truth, the characteristics described don't guarantee that the man will do a good job. The information is somewhat irrelevant. What else might you want to know? How about whether the man had already held a political office and done a good job? In this case, we want to ask, How much information is adequate in order to make a decision based on logic instead of assumptions?

The following questions, presented in Figure 1, below, are ones you may apply to formulating a logical, reasoned perspective in the above scenario or any other situation:

1. **What's happening?** Gather the basic information and begin to think of questions.
2. **Why is it important?** Ask yourself why it's significant and whether or not you agree.
3. **What don't I see?** Is there anything important missing?
4. **How do I know?** Ask yourself where the information came from and how it was constructed.
5. **Who is saying it?** What's the position of the speaker and what is influencing them?
6. **What else? What if?** What other ideas exist and are there other possibilities?



Figure 1

Problem-Solving With Critical Thinking

[Edit section](#)

For most people, a typical day is filled with critical thinking and problem-solving challenges. In fact, critical thinking and problem-solving go hand-in-hand. They both refer to using knowledge, facts, and data to solve problems effectively. But with **problem-solving**, you are specifically identifying, selecting, and defending your solution. Below are some examples of using critical thinking to problem-solve:

- Your roommate was upset and said some unkind words to you, which put a crimp in your relationship. You try to see through the angry behaviors to determine how you might best support your roommate and help bring your relationship back to a comfortable spot.
- Your campus club has been languishing on account of lack of participation and funds. The new club president, though, is a marketing major and has identified some strategies to interest students in joining and supporting the club. Implementation is forthcoming.
- Your final art class project challenges you to conceptualize form in new ways. On the last day of class when students present their projects, you describe the techniques you used to fulfill the assignment. You explain why and how you selected that approach.
- Your math teacher sees that the class is not quite grasping a concept. She uses clever questioning to dispel anxiety and guide you to new understanding of the concept.
- You have a job interview for a position that you feel you are only partially qualified for, although you really want the job and you are excited about the prospects. You analyze how you will explain your skills and experiences in a way to show that you are a good match for the prospective employer.
- You are doing well in college, and most of your college and living expenses are covered. But there are some gaps between what you want and what you feel you can afford. You analyze your income, savings, and budget to better calculate what you

will need to stay in college and maintain your desired level of spending.

Problem-Solving Action Checklist

[Edit section](#)

Problem-solving can be an efficient and rewarding process, especially if you are organized and mindful of critical steps and strategies. Remember, too, to assume the attributes of a good critical thinker. If you are curious, reflective, knowledge-seeking, open to change, probing, organized, and ethical, your challenge or problem will be less of a hurdle, and you'll be in a good position to find intelligent solutions.

STRATEGIES	ACTION CHECKLIST ^[2]
1. Define the problem	• Identify the problem • Provide as many supporting details as possible • Provide examples • Organize the information logically
2. Identify available solutions	• Use logic to identify your most important goals • Identify implications and consequences • Identify facts • Compare and contrast possible solutions
3. Identify available solutions	• Use gathered facts and relevant evidence • Support and defend solutions considered valid • Defend your solution

Evaluating Information With Critical Thinking

[Edit section](#)

Evaluating information can be one of the most complex tasks you will be faced with in college. But if you utilize the following four strategies, you will be well on your way to success:

1. Read for understanding by using text coding
2. Examine arguments
3. Clarify thinking
4. Cultivate “habits of mind”

1. Read for Understanding Using Text Coding (a.k.a. Annotating)

[Edit section](#)

*** Refer to the “Annotate and Take Notes” section in Chapter 1.

2. Examine Arguments

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When you examine arguments or claims that an author, speaker, or other source is making, your goal is to identify and examine the hard facts. You can use the **spectrum of authority strategy** for this purpose. The spectrum of authority strategy assists you in identifying the “hot” end of an argument—feelings, beliefs, cultural influences, and societal influences—and the “cold” end of

an argument—scientific influences. The following video explains this strategy.

YouTube Video

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3. Clarify Thinking

[Edit section](#)

When you use critical thinking to evaluate information, you need to clarify your thinking to yourself and likely to others. Doing this well is mainly a process of asking and answering probing questions, such as the logic questions discussed earlier. Design your questions to fit your needs, but be sure to cover adequate ground. What is the purpose? What question are we trying to answer? What point of view is being expressed? What assumptions are we or others making? What are the facts and data we know, and how do we know them? What are the concepts we're working with? What are the conclusions, and do they make sense? What are the implications?

4. Cultivate “Habits of Mind”

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“Habits of mind” are the personal commitments, values, and standards you have about the principle of good thinking. Consider your intellectual commitments, values, and standards. Do you approach problems with an open mind, a respect for truth, and an inquiring attitude? Some good habits to have when thinking critically are being receptive to having your opinions changed, having respect for others, being independent and not accepting something is true until you've had the time to examine the available evidence, being fair-minded, having respect for a reason, having an inquiring mind, not making assumptions, and always, especially, questioning your own conclusions—in other words, developing an intellectual work ethic. Try to work these qualities into your daily life.

References

1. ["Logic." Wordnik. n.d. Web. 16 Feb 2016.](#) ↵
2. ["Student Success-Thinking Critically In Class and Online." Critical Thinking Gateway. St Petersburg College, n.d. Web. 16 Feb 2016.](#) ↵

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3: TEST PREPARATION AND PERFORMANCE

3.1: Preparing for Exams

3.1.1: Pre- Mid- and Post-Test-Taking Strategies

3.1.2: Studying to Learn (Not Just for Tests)

3.1.3: Test-Taking Strategy Specifics

3.1.4: Test Anxiety and How to Control It

3.2: Taking Tests

3.2.1: The Secrets of the Q and A's

3.3: Using Test Results

3.1: PREPARING FOR EXAMS

3.1.1: Pre- Mid- and Post-Test-Taking Strategies

3.1.2: Studying to Learn (Not Just for Tests)

3.1.3: Test-Taking Strategy Specifics

3.1.4: Test Anxiety and How to Control It

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3.1.1: Pre- Mid- and Post-Test-Taking Strategies



- Contributed by [Dave Dillon](#)
- Counselor/Professor at [Grossmont College](#)

Phyllis Nissila

Pre-Test Strategies



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Q: When should you start preparing for the first test? Circle...

1. The night before.
2. The week prior.
3. The first day of classes.

If you answered "3. The first day of classes," you are correct. If you circled all three, you are also correct. Preparing to pass tests is something that begins when learning begins and continues all the way through to the final exam.

Many students, however, don't start thinking about test taking, whether weekly exams, mid-terms, or finals, until the day before when they engage in an all-nighter, or cramming. From the previous unit on memory, you might recall that the brain can only process an average of 5-7 new pieces of information at a time. Additionally, unless memory devices are used to aid memory and to cement information into long term memory (or at least until the test is over tomorrow!) chances are slim that students who cram will effectively learn and remember the information.

Additionally, a lot of students are unaware of the many strategies available to help with the test-taking experience before, during, and after. For starters, take a look at what has helped you so far.

EXERCISE 1: Pre-Test Taking Strategies

PART A:

Directions: Put a check mark next to the pre-test strategies you already employ.

- ___ Organize your notebook and other class materials the first week of classes.
- ___ Maintain your organized materials throughout the term.
- ___ Take notes on key points from lectures and other materials.
- ___ Make sure you understand the information as you go along.
- ___ Access your instructor's help and the help of a study group, as needed.
- ___ Organize a study group, if desired.
- ___ Create study tools such as flashcards, graphic organizers, etc. as study aids.
- ___ Complete all homework assignments on time.
- ___ Review likely test items several times beforehand.
- ___ Ask your instructor what items are likely to be covered on the test.
- ___ Ask your instructor if she or he can provide a study guide or practice test.
- ___ Ask your instructor if he/she gives partial credit for test items such as essays.
- ___ Maintain an active learner attitude.
- ___ Schedule extra study time in the days just prior to the test.
- ___ Gather all notes, handouts, and other materials needed before studying.
- ___ Review all notes, handouts, and other materials.
- ___ Organize your study area for maximum concentration and efficiency.
- ___ Create and use mnemonic devices to aid memory.
- ___ Put key terms, formulas, etc., on a single study sheet that can be quickly reviewed.
- ___ Schedule study times short enough (1-2 hours) so you do not get burned out.
- ___ Get plenty of sleep the night before.
- ___ Set a back-up alarm in case the first alarm doesn't sound or you sleep through it.
- ___ Have a good breakfast with complex carbs and protein to see you through.
- ___ Show up 5-10 minutes early to get completely settled before the test begins.
- ___ Use the restroom beforehand to minimize distractions.

PART B

Directions: By reviewing the pre-test strategies, above, you have likely discovered new ideas to add to what you already use. Make a list of them.

Mid-Test Strategies

Here is a list of the most common—and useful—strategies to survive this ubiquitous college experience.

- Scan the test, first, to get the big picture of how many test items there are, what types there are (multiple choice, matching, essay, etc.), and the point values of each item or group of items.
- Determine which way you want to approach the test: Some students start with the easy questions first, that is, the ones they immediately know the answers to, saving the difficult ones for later, knowing they can spend the remaining time on them. Some students begin with the biggest-point items first, to make sure they get the most points.
- Determine a schedule that takes into consideration how long you have to test, and the types of questions on the test. Essay questions, for example, will require more time than multiple choice, or matching questions.
- Keep your eye on the clock.
- If you can mark on the test, put a check mark next to items you are not sure of just yet. It is easy to go back and find them to answer later on. You might just find help in other test questions covering similar information.
- Sit where you are most comfortable. That said, sitting near the front has a couple of advantages: You may be less distracted by other students. If a classmate comes up with a question for the instructor and there is an important clarification given, you will be better able to hear it and apply it, if needed.
- Wear ear plugs, if noise distracts you.
- You do **NOT** have to start with #1! If you are unsure of it, mark it to come back to later on.
- Bring water...this helps calm the nerves, for one, and water is also needed for optimum brain function.
- If permitted, get up and stretch (or stretch in your chair) from time to time to relieve tension and assist the blood to the brain!
- Remember to employ strategies to reduce test-taking anxiety (covered in the next lesson)
- If despite all of your best efforts to prepare for a test you just cannot remember the answer to a given item for multiple choice, matching, and/or true/false questions, employ one or more of the following educated guessing (also known as “educated selection”) techniques. By using these techniques, you have a *better* chance of selecting the correct answer. It is usually best to avoid selecting an extreme or all-inclusive answer (also known as 100% modifiers) such as “always,” and “never”. Choose, instead, words such as “usually,” “sometimes,” etc. (also known as in-between modifiers). If the answers are numbers, choose one of the middle numbers. If you have options such as “all of the above,” or “both A and B,” make sure each item is true before selecting those options. Choose the longest, or most inclusive, answer. Make sure to match the grammar of question and answer. For example, if the question indicates a plural answer, look for the plural answer. Regarding matching tests: count both sides to be matched. If there are more questions than answers, ask if you can use an answer more than once. Pay close attention to items that ask you to choose the “best” answer. This means one answer is better or more inclusive than a similar answer. Read all of the response options.

Post-Test Strategies

In addition to sighing that big sigh of relief, here are a few suggestions to help with future tests.

- If you don’t understand why you did not get an item right, ask the instructor. This is especially useful for quizzes that contain information that may be incorporated into more inclusive exams such as mid-terms and finals.
- Analyze your results to help you in the future. For example, see if most of your incorrect answers were small things such as failing to include the last step in a math item, or neglecting to double-check for simple errors in a short-answer or essay item. See where in the test you made the most errors: beginning, middle, or end. Also analyze which type of questions, true/false, multiple choice, essay, etc. And which topics were missed. This will help you pay closer attention to those sections in the future.

EXERCISE 2: Give Your Best Advice

Directions: Write a letter of advice to Chen incorporating 10 test-taking tips and strategies you think will help him.

Chen believes he is good at organization, and he usually is—for about the first two weeks of classes. He then becomes overwhelmed with all of the handouts and materials and tends to start slipping in the organization department. When it comes to tests, he worries that his notes might not cover all of the right topics and that he will not be able to remember all of the key terms and points—especially for his math class. During tests, he sometimes gets stuck on an item and tends to spend too much time there. He also sometimes changes answers but finds out later that his original selection was correct. Chen is also easily distracted by other students and noises which makes it hard for him to concentrate sometimes, and, unfortunately, he does admit to occasionally “cramming” the night before.

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3.1.2: Studying to Learn (Not Just for Tests)

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Figure 6.3



Late-night cramming is not an effective studying strategy!

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You have truly learned material when you can readily recall it and actually use it—on tests or in real-life situations. Effective studying is your most important tool to combat test anxiety, but more important, effective studying helps you truly master the material and be able to apply it as you need to, in school and beyond.

Effective studying is an ongoing process of reviewing course material. The first and most important thing you should know is that studying is not something you do a few days before an exam. To be effective, studying is something you do as part of an ongoing learning process, throughout the duration of the term.

Studying Every Day

Studying begins after each class or assignment when you review your notes. Each study session should involve three steps:

1. **Gather your learning materials.** Take time to merge your class notes with your reading notes. How do they complement each other? Stop and think. What do the notes tell you about your material? What aspects of the material are you unsure about? Do you need to reread a part of your text? Write down any questions you have for your instructor and pay a visit during office hours. It is better to clear up any misconceptions and get your questions answered soon after you are exposed to the material, rather than to wait, for two reasons: (1) the question or doubt is fresh in your mind and you won't forget about it and (2) instructors usually build their lessons on material already presented. If you don't take these steps now, you are setting yourself up for problems later in the course.
2. **Apply or visualize.** What does this material mean to *you*? How will *you* use this new knowledge? Try to find a way to apply it in your own life or thoughts. If you can't use the knowledge right away, visualize yourself using the knowledge to solve a problem or visualize yourself teaching the material to other students.
3. **Cement your knowledge.** If you use the two-column note-taking method, cover up the right side of your notes with a piece of paper, leaving the questions in the left column exposed. Test yourself by trying to answer your questions without referring to your notes. How did you do? If you are unsure about anything, look up the answer and write it down right away. Don't let a wrong answer be the last thing you wrote on a subject, because you will most likely continue to remember the wrong answer.

Studying in Course Units

At the end of each unit, or at least every two weeks or so, use your notes and textbook to write an outline or summary of the material in your own words. (Remember the paragraphs you wrote to summarize each class or reading? They'll be very helpful to you here.) After you have written the summary or outline, go back and reread your outline from the prior unit followed by the one you just wrote. Does the new one build on the earlier one? Do you feel confident you understand the material?

Studying before the Exam

At least a week before a major exam, ask yourself these questions: What has the instructor said about what is included on the exam? Has the instructor said anything about what types of questions will be included? If you were the instructor, what questions would you ask on an exam? Challenge yourself to come up with some really tough open-ended questions. Think about how you might answer them. Be sure to go to any review sessions the instructor or your section leader holds.

Now go back and review your outlines. Do they cover what the instructor has suggested might be on the exam? After reviewing your outlines, reread the sections of your notes that are most closely associated with expected exam questions. Pay special attention to those items the instructor emphasized during class. Read key points aloud and write them down on index cards. Make flash cards to review in downtimes, such as when you're waiting for a bus or for a class to start.

More Tips for Success

- **Schedule a consistent study-review time for each course at least once a week**, in addition to your class and assignment time. Keep to that schedule as rigorously as you do your class schedule. Use your study time to go through the steps outlined earlier; this is not meant to be a substitute for your assignment time.
- **Get yourself in the right space.** Choose to study in a quiet, well-lit space. Your chair should be comfortable but provide good support. Remember that libraries were designed for reading and should be your first option.
- **Minimize distractions.** Turn off your cell phone and get away from Facebook, television, other nearby activities, and chatty friends or roommates. All of these can cut into the effectiveness of your study efforts. Multitasking and studying don't mix.
- **If you will be studying for a long time, take short breaks at least once an hour.** Get up, stretch, breathe deeply, and then get back to work. (If you keep up with your daily assignments and schedule weekly review sessions for yourself—and keep them—there should be almost no need for long study sessions.)

Studying in Groups

Figure 6.4



A study group that is too large is more likely to digress into casual conversation.

clemsonunivlibrary – [Study groups are back studying in Cooper! All is right with the world](#) – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Study groups are a great idea—as long as they are thoughtfully managed. A study group can give you new perspectives on course material and help you fill in gaps in your notes. Discussing course content will sharpen your critical thinking related to the

subject, and being part of a group to which you are accountable will help you study consistently. In a study group, you will end up “teaching” each other the material, which is the strongest way to retain new material. But remember, being in a group working together doesn’t mean there will be less work for you as an individual; your work will just be much more effective.

Here are some tips for creating and managing effective study groups:

- **Think small.** Limit your study group to no more than three or four people. A larger group would limit each student’s participation and make scheduling of regular study sessions a real problem.
- **Go for quality.** Look for students who are doing well in the course, who ask questions, and who participate in class discussions. Don’t make friendship the primary consideration for who should be in your group. Meet up with your friends instead during “social time”—study time is all about learning.
- **Look for complementary skills and learning styles.** Complementary skills make for a good study group because your weaknesses will be countered by another student’s strengths. When a subject requires a combination of various skills, strengths in each of those skills is helpful (e.g., a group with one student who is really good at physics and another at math would be perfect for an engineering course). Finally, a variety of learning styles is helpful because each of you pick up differing signals and emphases from the instructor that you can share with each other, so you will not likely miss important points.
- **Meet regularly.** When you first set up a study group, agree to a regular meeting schedule and stick to it. Moving study session times around can result in nonparticipation, lack of preparation, and eventually the collapse of the study group. Equally important is keeping your sessions to the allotted times. If you waste time and regularly meet much longer than you agreed to, participants will not feel they are getting study value for their time invested.
- **Define an agenda and objectives.** Give your study sessions focus so that you don’t get sidetracked. Based on requests and comments from the group, the moderator should develop the agenda and start each session by summarizing what the group expects to cover and then keep the group to task.
- **Include some of the following items on your agenda:**
 - Review and discuss class and assignment notes since your last meeting.
 - Discuss assigned readings.
 - Quiz each other on class material.
 - “Reteach” aspects of the material team participants are unsure of.
 - Brainstorm possible test questions and responses.
 - Review quiz and test results and correct misunderstandings.
 - Critique each other’s ideas for paper themes and approaches.
 - Define questions to ask the instructor.
- **Assign follow-up work.** If there is any work that needs to be done between meetings, make sure that all team members know specifically what is expected of them and agree to do the work.
- **Rotate the role of moderator or discussion leader.** This helps ensure “ownership” of the group is spread equally across all members and ensures active participation and careful preparation.

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3.1.3: Test-Taking Strategy Specifics

- Contributed by [Dave Dillon](#)
- Counselor/Professor at [Grossmont College](#)

Dave Dillon

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”

– Benjamin Franklin

Discipline, Preparation and Execution

From what I have seen in my own educational experiences, along with coaching and teaching at the college and university level for over 20 years, test taking (with few exceptions) comes down to discipline, preparation and execution. Students wanting to be successful have to have the self-discipline to schedule time to study well in advance of the exam. They have to actually do the work: the preparation needed in order to have the best opportunity for success on the exam. Then they must execute: they have to be able to apply their preparation accordingly and perform well on the exam.

Preparation for an exam is not glamorous. It's easy to find other things to do that are more interesting and fun. Students need to keep themselves motivated with their “eyes on the prize.” Think of it like this: if the most important event of your life was coming up and you wanted to perform to the best of your ability in that event, you would likely spend some time preparing for it, rehearsing for it, practicing it, etc. A student may argue that an exam they will be taking would not be the most important event of their life, but think back to the chapter on Passion. If you're already spending the time, effort, energy and money to attend college, why not do it to the best of your ability?

It would be beneficial to spread this preparation and practice out over time and prepare periodically rather than to wait until the last minute and binge study or cram. Your preparation would not be the same and this may affect your test score. Binge studying and cramming also are not healthy. Staying up late puts stress on our brain and body, and not getting adequate sleep places our bodies at risk for getting sick.

“One of the most important keys to success is having the discipline to do what you know you should do, even when you don't feel like doing it.”

– Unknown

“The will to succeed is important, but what's more important is the will to prepare.”

– Bobby Knight

Everyone wants to be successful. When the exam is passed out, everyone wants to perform well. But what often separates successful students and less successful students is the preparation time put in.

Studying the right thing is a process and a skill. As you gain more experience, you will learn how to become better at knowing what to study. It can be very frustrating to spend a lot of time preparing and studying and then finding out that what you studied was not on the exam. You will see a lot of variance with exams due to different instructors, classes and types of tests. The better you become at predicting what will be on the exam and study accordingly, the better you will perform on your exams. Try placing yourself in your instructor's shoes and design questions you think your instructor would ask. It's often an eye-opening experience for students and a great study strategy.

Preparation for Exam Strategies

Find out as much about the exam in advance as you can.

Some professors will tell you how many questions there will be, what format the exam will be in, how much time you will have, etc., and others will not. I encourage students to ask questions about the exam if there is not information given. I also encourage students to ask those questions before class, after class, in professors' office hours or via e-mail rather than during class.

Know the test

If you know how many questions, what the format is, and/or how much time you will have, you can start to mentally prepare for the exam much more so than if you are coming in with no information. There are two more important aspects that you may or may not know: a) what will be covered or asked on the exam; b) how the exam will be scored. Obviously, the more you know about what will be covered, the easier it is for you to be able to prepare for the exam. Most exam scoring is standardized, but not always.

Look for opportunities where some areas of the exam are worth more points than others. For example: An exam consists of 21 questions, with 10 being True/False, 10 being multiple choice, and one essay question. The T/F questions are worth 1 point each (10 points), the multiple-choice questions are worth 2 points each (20 points), and the essay question is worth 30 points. We know that the essay question is the most valuable (it is worth half of the value of the exam). And we should allocate our time for it accordingly. I would advise starting with the essay question. Do a quick analysis of time to be able to spend your time on the exam wisely. You want to spend some time with the exam question since it is so valuable, without sacrificing adequate time to ensure the T/F and multiple-choice questions are answered.

Often, the order of the exam in this scenario will be: T/F first, multiple choice second and essay third. Most students will go in the chronological order of the exam, but a savvy student would start with the essay. If an exam were to last for 30 minutes with this format of questions, I might recommend a student spent 15 minutes on the essay question, ten minutes on the multiple choice, three minutes on the T/F and two minutes reviewing their answer.

Also, look for situations where exams penalize students for incorrectly answering a question. This does not occur very often, but is the case with some exams. With the SAT for example, students are awarded one point for a correct answer and $\frac{1}{4}$ of a point subtracted for an incorrect answer. Points are not awarded nor subtracted for leaving a question blank. Thus, the strategy for a multiple-choice question is: if you can narrow down the potentially correct answer to two rather than four or five, it is statistically advantageous to answer the question and guess between the two answers; however, if a student had no idea if any of the answers were correct or incorrect, it would be best to leave the answer blank. Remember, this is rare, but it is important to understand the strategy when students take these exams.

In conclusion, the more information you have about the exam, the better you can prepare for content, allocation of time spent on aspects of the exam, and the more confident you will be in knowing how and when to attempt to answer questions.

Take care of your body

Before the exam, it is important to prepare your brain and body for optimal performance for your exam. Do not cram the night before. Get a good night's sleep. Make sure you eat (nutritiously) before the exam. I recommend exercising the day before and if possible a few hours before the exam.

Strategies for Specific Exam Formats

True or False Questions

Look for qualifiers. A qualifier is a word that is absolute. Examples are: all, never, no, always, none, every, only, entirely. They are often seen in false statements. This is because it is more difficult to create a true statement using a qualifier like never, no, always, etc. For example, "All cats chase mice." Cats may be known for chasing mice, but not all of them do so. The answer here is false and the qualifier "all" gave us a tip. Qualifiers such as: sometimes, many, some, most, often, and usually are commonly found in true statements. For example: "Most cats chase mice." This is true and the qualifier "most" gave us a tip.

Make sure to read the entire statement. All parts of a sentence must be true if the whole statement is to be true. If one part of it is false, the whole sentence is false. Long sentences are often false for this reason.

Students should guess on True or False questions they do not know the answer to unless there is a penalty for an incorrect answer.

Multiple Choice Questions

Think of multiple choice questions as four (or five) true or false statements in one. One of the statements is true (the correct answer) and the others will be false. Apply the same strategy toward qualifiers. If you see an absolute qualifier in one of the answer choices, it is probably false and not the correct answer. Try to identify the true statement. If you can do this, you have the answer as there is only one. If you cannot do this at first, try eliminating answers you know to be false.

If there is no penalty for incorrect answers, my suggestion is to guess if you are not certain of the answer. If there is a penalty for incorrect answers, common logic is to guess if you can eliminate two of the answers as incorrect (pending what the penalty is). If there's a penalty and you cannot narrow down the answers, it's best to leave it blank. You may wish to ask your instructor for clarification.

Answers that are strange and unrelated to the question are usually false. If two answers have a word that looks or sounds similar, one of those is usually correct. For example: abductor/ adductor. If you see these as two of the four or five choices, one of them is usually correct. Also look for answers that are grammatically incorrect. These are usually incorrect answers. If you have to completely guess, choose B or C. It is statistically proven to be correct more than 25 percent of the time. If there are four answers for each question, and an exam had standardized the answers, each answer on the exam A, B, C and D would be equal. But most instructors do not standardize their answers, and more correct answers are found in the middle (B and C then the extremes A and D or E). "People writing isolated four-choice questions hide the correct answer in the two middle positions about 70% of the time."^[1] This is 20 percent more correct answers found in B or C than a standardized exam with equal correct answers for each letter.

Matching Questions

Although less common than the other types of exams, you will likely see some matching exams during your time in college. First, read the instructions and take a look at both lists to determine what the items are and their relationship. It is especially important to determine if both lists have the same number of items and if all items are to be used, and used only once.

Matching exams become much more difficult if one list has more items than the other or if items either might not be used or could be used more than once. If your exam instructions do not discern this, you may wish to ask your instructor for further clarification. I advise students to take a look at the whole list before selecting an answer because a more correct answer may be found further into the list. Mark items when you are sure you have a match (pending the number of items in the list this may eliminate answers for the future). Guessing (if needed) should take place once you have selected answers you are certain about.

Short-Answer Questions

Read all of the instructions first. Budget your time and then read all of the questions. Answer the ones you know best or feel the most confident with. Then go back to the other ones. If you do not know the answer and there is no penalty for incorrect answers, guess. Use common sense. Sometimes instructors will award partial credit for a logical answer that is related even if it is not the correct answer.

Essay Questions

Keep in mind that knowing the format of the exam can help you determine how to study. If I know that I am taking a True-False exam, I know that I will need to discern whether a statement is True or False. I will need to know subject content for the course. But if I am studying for short answer and especially for essay questions, I must know a lot more. For essay questions, I must have much greater content knowledge and be able to make a coherent argument that answers the question using information from textbooks, lectures or other course materials. I have to place a lot more time and thought into studying for an essay exam than for True-False or Multiple-Choice exams.

Read the essay question(s) and the instructions first. Plan your time wisely and organize your answer before you start to write.

Address the answer to the question in your first or second sentence. It may help to restate the original question. Write clearly and legibly. Instructors have difficulty grading essays that they cannot read. Save some time for review when you have finished writing to check spelling, grammar and coherent thought in your answer. Make sure you have addressed all parts of the essay question.

During the Exam:

Always read the directions first. Read them thoroughly.

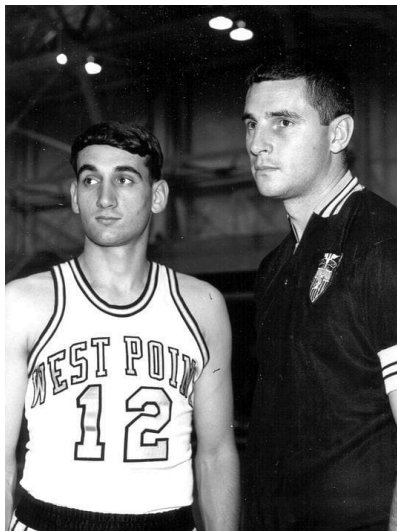
Preview the exam to help you allocate proper time for each area.

Skip questions if you do not know the answer but make a mark somewhere to ensure you are able to go back to those questions (you may need to reallocate your prepared time for this depending on how many there are).

Allocate some time to review your answers before submitting your exam or the exam time expiring.

One of the biggest mistakes that students make after they take an exam in a course is that they do not use the exam for the future. The exam contains a lot of information that can be helpful in studying for future exams. Students that perform well on an exam often put it away thinking they do not need it anymore. Students who do poorly on an exam often put it away, not wanting to think about it any further.

In both cases, students are missing out on the value of reviewing their exams. It is wise to review exams for three reasons: 1) students should review the answers that were correct because they may see those questions on future exams and it is important to reinforce learning; 2) students should review the answers that were incorrect in order to learn what the correct answer was and why. These questions also may appear on a future exam. In addition, occasionally an answer is marked incorrect, when it should have been marked correct. The student would never know this if they didn't review their exam; and 3) there is value in reviewing the exam to try to predict what questions or what format will be used by a professor for a future exam in the same course.



Mike Krzyzewski, point guard at Army with Bob Knight, coach at Army.

Thinking about excuses reminds me of a story about Mike Krzyzewski, the successful Duke University men's basketball coach. Before Krzyzewski coached, he was a student at the United States Military Academy at West Point. One day in his first year, Krzyzewski and his roommate were walking and his roommate stepped in a puddle. Mud splashed onto Krzyzewski's uniform. Immediately, an upperclassman screamed at Krzyzewski about not knowing the rules of wearing a clean uniform. Plebes (first-year students at military academies) are allowed three answers when asked a question: "Yes sir!" "No sir!" And "No excuse sir!" Krzyzewski repeated himself, "No excuse sir!" Despite wanting to explain what had happened and that it was not his fault, he realized that there was no excuse. It was his responsibility to keep a clean uniform.

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Adaptions: Reformatted, some content removed to fit a broader audience.

1. Yigal Attali and Maya Bar-Hillel, "Guess Where: The Position of Correct Answers in Multiple-Choice Test Items as a Psychometric Variable," *Journal of Educational Measurement* 40 no. 2 (2003):109-128. ↵

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3.1.4: Test Anxiety and How to Control It

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Activity: Testing Your Test Anxiety

Take the true-or-false quiz below. There are no wrong answers.

I have a hard time starting to study for a test.
When studying for an exam, I feel desperate or lost.
When studying for an exam, I often feel bored and tired.
I don't sleep well the night before an exam.
My appetite changes the day of the exam. (I'm not hungry and skip meals or I overeat—especially high-sugar items like candy or ice cream.)
When taking an exam, I am often confused or suffer mental blocks.
When taking an exam, I feel panicky and my palms get sweaty.
I'm usually in a bad mood after taking an exam.
I usually score lower on exams than on papers, assignments, and projects.
After an exam, I can remember things I couldn't recall during the exam.

If you answered true to any of the statements in the table above, you have suffered some of the symptoms of test anxiety. Most of us have experienced this. It is normal to feel stress before an exam, and in fact, that may be a good thing. Stress motivates you to study and review, generates adrenaline to help sharpen your reflexes and focus while taking the exam, and may even help you remember some of the material you need. But suffering too many stress symptoms or suffering any of them severely will impede your ability to show what you have learned. Test anxiety is a psychological condition in which a person feels distress before, during, or after a test or exam to the point where stress causes poor performance. Anxiety during a test interferes with your ability to recall knowledge from memory as well as your ability to use higher-level thinking skills effectively.

There are steps you should take if you find that stress is getting in your way:

- **Be prepared.** A primary cause of test anxiety is not knowing the material. If you take good class and reading notes and review them regularly, this stressor should be greatly reduced if not eliminated. You should be confident going into your exam (but not overconfident).
- **Bounce bad vibes.** Your own negative thoughts—"I'll never pass this exam" or "I can't figure this out, I must be really stupid!"—may move you into spiraling stress cycle that in itself causes enough anxiety to block your best efforts. When you feel you are brewing a storm of negative thoughts, stop what you are doing and clear your mind. Allow yourself to daydream a little; visualize yourself in pleasant surroundings with good friends. Don't go back to work until you feel the tension release. Sometimes it helps to take a deep breath and shout "STOP!" and then proceed with clearing your mind. Once your mind is clear, repeat a reasonable affirmation to yourself—"I know this stuff"—before continuing your work.
- **Visualize success.** Picture what it will feel like to get that A. Translate that vision into specific, reasonable goals and work toward each individual goal. Take one step at a time and reward yourself for each goal you complete.
- **It's all about you!** Don't waste your time comparing yourself to other students in the class, especially during the exam. Keep focused on your own work and your own plan. Exams are not a race, so it doesn't matter who turns in their paper first. Certainly you have no idea how they did on their exam, so a thought like "Kristen is already done, she must have aced it, I wish I had her skills" is counterproductive and will only cause additional anxiety.
- **Have a plan and follow it.** As soon as you know that an exam is coming, you can develop a plan for studying. As soon as you get your exam paper, you should develop a plan for the exam itself. We'll discuss this more later in this chapter. Don't wait to cram for an exam at the last minute; the pressure you put on yourself and the late night will cause more anxiety, and you won't learn or retain much.

- **Make sure you eat well and get a good night's sleep before the exam.** Hunger, poor eating habits, energy drinks, and lack of sleep all contribute to test anxiety.
- **Chill!** You perform best when you are relaxed, so learn some relaxation exercises you can use during an exam. Before you begin your work, take a moment to listen to your body. Which muscles are tense? Move them slowly to relax them. Tense them and relax them. Exhale, then continue to exhale for a few more seconds until you feel that your lungs are empty. Inhale slowly through your nose and feel your rib cage expand as you do. This will help oxygenate your blood and reenergize your mind. Chapter 10 "Taking Control of Your Health" has more tips for dealing with stress.

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3.2: TAKING TESTS

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Types of Tests

All tests are designed to determine how much you know about a particular subject at a particular point in time. But you should be aware of differences in types of tests because this will help guide how you prepare for them. Two general types of tests are based on their objectives, or how they are intended to be used: formative assessments and summative assessments.

Formative assessments include quizzes, unit tests, pop quizzes, and review quizzes from a textbook or its Web site. Their main objective is to make sure you know the fundamental material before moving on to more challenging topics. Because these quizzes usually don't count much toward your final grade, many students think they are not very important. In fact, these quizzes are very important, particularly to you; they can help you to identify what you know and what you still need to learn to be successful in the course and in applying the material. A poor result on a quiz may not negatively affect your final grade much—but learning from its results and correcting your mistakes *will* affect your final grade, on the positive side, when you take midterms and finals! More on this in [Section 6.6 “Using Test Results”](#).

Summative assessments include midterms and finals. They are used by the instructor to determine if you are mastering a large portion of the material, and as such, they usually carry a heavy weight toward your final grade for the course. Because of this, they often result in high levels of test anxiety and long study periods.

In addition to this classification by objective, tests can also be grouped into various categories based on how they are delivered. Each type has its own peculiar strategies.

- **Paper tests** are still the most common type of test, requiring students to write answers on the test pages or in a separate test booklet. They are typically used for in-class tests. Neatness and good grammar count, even if it's not an English exam. Remember that the instructor will be reading dozens of test papers and will not likely spend much time trying to figure out your hieroglyphics, arrows, and cross-outs.
- **Open-book tests** allow the student to consult their notes, textbook, or both while taking the exam. Instructors often give this type of test when they are more interested in seeing your thoughts and critical thinking than your memory power. Be prepared to expose and defend your own viewpoints. When preparing, know where key material is present in your book and notes; create an index for your notes and use sticky notes to flag key pages of your textbook before the exam. Be careful when copying information or formulas to your test answers, because nothing looks worse in an open-book exam than misusing the material at your disposal.
- **Take-home tests** are like open-book tests except you have the luxury of time on your side. Make sure you submit the exam on time. Know what the instructor's expectations are about the content of your answers. The instructor will likely expect more detail and more complete work because you are not under a strict time limit and because you have access to reference materials. Be clear about when the test is due. (Some instructors will ask you to e-mail your exam to them by a specific time.) Also find out if the instructor allows or expects you to collaborate with classmates. Be sure to type your exam and don't forget to spell-check!
- **Online tests** are most commonly used for formative assessments, although they are starting to find their way into high-stakes exams, particularly in large lecture classes that fulfill a graduation requirement (like introductory psychology or history survey courses). The main advantage of online tests is that they can be computer graded, providing fast feedback to the student (with formative tests) and allowing the instructor to grade hundreds of exams easily (with summative assessments). Since these tests are computer graded, be aware that the instructor's judgment is not involved in the grading. Your answers will be either right or wrong; there is no room for partially correct responses. With online tests, be sure you understand the testing software. Are there practice questions? If so, make sure you use them. Find out if you will be allowed to move freely between test sections to go back and check your work or to complete questions you might have skipped. Some testing software does not allow you to return to sections once they are “submitted.” Unless your exam needs to be taken at a specific time, don't wait until the last minute to take the test. Should you have technical problems, you want to have time to resolve the issues. To avoid any conflicts with the testing software, close all other software applications before beginning the testing software.
- **Electronic tests in the classroom** are becoming more common as colleges install “smart classrooms” with technology such

as wireless “clicker” technology that instructors may use to get a quick read of students’ understanding of a lecture. This testing method allows for only true-or-false and multiple-choice questions, so it is rarely used for summative assessments. When taking this kind of quick quiz, take notes on questions you miss so that you can focus on them when you do your own review.

- **Presentations and oral tests** are the most complete means for instructors to evaluate students’ mastery of material, because the evaluation is highly interactive. The instructor can (and likely will) probe you on certain points, question your assumptions, or ask you to defend your point of view. Make sure you practice your presentation many times with and without an audience (your study group is good for this). Have a clear and concise point of view and keep to the allotted time. (You don’t want to miss delivering a killer close if your instructor cuts you off because you weren’t aware of the time!) Chapter 7 “Interacting with Instructors and Classes” covers public speaking and class presentations in more detail. Use the same strategies in oral exams.

Tips for Taking Tests

You’ve reviewed the material for a test and feel confident that you will do well. You have brought your test anxiety into control. What else can you do to ensure success on a test? Learn and apply these top ten test-taking strategies:

1. **Learn as much as you can about the test.** What has the instructor told you about the test? Will it be open book? What types of questions will be on it? Are there parts of the test that will be worth more points than others? Will it be cumulative or just cover the most recent material? Will you have choices about which questions to answer?
2. **Try to foresee the questions likely to be on the test.** What kinds of questions would you include if you were the instructor? Brainstorm possible questions with your study group. Look for possible questions in your notes. Review past quizzes and tests to see what kinds of questions the instructor likes to ask. Above all, take it seriously whenever your instructor warns, “This will be on the test.”
3. **Don’t be tempted to stay up late cramming. Get some exercise and watch what you eat.** Cramming is not a substitute for doing your assignments and studying consistently over time. It is far more important to get a good night’s sleep and face your test fresh and well rested. A good workout the day before an exam will help you be fresh and stay focused during the exam (provided you already like to work out; if not, find time to take a long walk). A healthy diet the night before and the day of the exam will give you energy and concentration to do well on the exam. Include “brain foods,” such as those rich in omega-3 oils, and avoid “heavy” foods that are rich in fat and sugar. (After the exam, you can celebrate with a cheeseburger, fries, and milkshake—but not before the exam!)
4. **Get to the test site early.** Take out all your allowable tools (pencils, pens, calculator, etc.). Turn off your cell phone (yes, all the way off, not on vibrate) as a way of disconnecting from your everyday world. Do some of the relaxation exercises described earlier for controlling test anxiety.
5. **Create a test plan.** Listen carefully to the directions given by the instructor. When you receive your test, scan the entire test first. Evaluate the importance of each section. Then create a time allocation plan. Decide how much time you should dedicate to each section. You don’t want to spend 80 percent of your time on a question worth 10 percent of the grade.
6. **Write it down.** Take a couple minutes to write down key facts, dates, principles, statistics, and formulas on a piece of scratch paper or in the margin of the exam paper. Do this while you are still fresh and aren’t yet feeling time pressure (when it will be harder to remember them). Then you can refer to these notes as you take the exam.
7. **Read the directions carefully.** Then reread them. Do you understand what is expected of you? If not, ask the instructor to be sure you are clear. Too many students lose points simply by not following directions completely!
8. **Do the easy questions first.** By getting the easy questions out of the way, you’ll feel more confident about the test and have more time to think about the tougher questions. Start with the objective sections of the exam first (multiple choice, true or false, and matching columns). As you answer these questions, keep an eye out for facts or concepts you may want to use later in an essay question.
9. **Keep an eye on the time.** Keep as close to your plan as possible. If you see that you are running out of time, don’t panic. Move to those questions you think you can still answer accurately within the remaining time.
10. **Check your work.** This doesn’t mean going through all your calculations again. Start by ensuring that you have *complete* answers according to the directions. Then look for other common mistakes, such as a misplaced decimal point, dropped words (especially those that can modify the answer, like “not”), and any incomplete or incomprehensible phrases.

Strategies for Math and Science Exams

Math tests require some special strategies because they are often problem based rather than question based.

Do the following before the test:

- Attend all classes and complete all assignments. Pay special attention to working on all assigned problems. After reviewing problems in class, take careful notes about what you did incorrectly. Repeat the problem and do a similar one as soon as possible. It is important that the last solution to a problem in your mind is a correct solution.
- Think about how each problem solution might be applied in a real-world situation. This helps make even the most complex solutions relevant and easier to learn.
- In your study group, take turns presenting solutions to problems and observing and correcting everyone's work.
- If you are having difficulty with a concept, get help right away. Remember that math especially builds new material on previous material, so if you are having trouble with a concept now, you are likely to have trouble going forward. Make an appointment with your instructor, your teaching assistant, or a skilled classmate. Check with your college's academic support office to see about a tutor. Don't be shy about asking for a tutor—tutoring is not just for students needing remedial help; many successful students seek them out, too.

Do the following during the test:

- Review the entire test before you start and work the problems you feel most confident with first.
- Approach each problem following three distinct steps:
 1. Read the problem through twice: the first time to get the full concept of the question, and the second time to draw out pertinent information. After you read through the problem the first time, ask yourself, "What is this problem about?" and "What is the answer likely to look like?" The second time through, consider these questions: "What facts do I have available?" "What do I know?" "What measurable units must the answer be in?" Think about the operations and formulas you will need to use. Try to estimate a ballpark answer.
 2. Compute your answer. First, eliminate as many unknowns as possible. You may need to use a separate formula for each unknown. Use algebraic formulas as far as you can before plugging in actual numbers; that will make it easier to cancel and combine factors. Remember that you may need two or more tries before you come up with the answer.
 3. Check your work. Start by comparing your actual answer to the estimate you made when you first read the problem. Does your final answer sound likely? Check your arithmetic by opposite operations: use multiplication to check division and addition to check subtraction, and so on.

You should consider using these three steps whenever you are working with any math problems, not just when you get problems on tests.

Science tests also are often problem based, but they also generally use the scientific method. This is why science tests may require some specific strategies.

- Before the test, review your lab notes as well as your class notes and assignments. Many exam questions build upon lab experience, so pay close attention to your notes, assignments, and labs. Practice describing the experimental process.
- Read the question carefully. What does the instructor expect you to do? Prove a hypothesis? Describe an experiment? Summarize research? Underline the words that state the objective of the question.
- Look carefully at all the diagrams given with the question. What do they illustrate? Why are they included with the question? Are there elements on the diagram you are expected to label?
- Many science questions are based on the scientific method and experimental model. When you read the test question, identify the hypothesis the problem is proposing; be prepared to describe an experimental structure to prove a hypothesis. When you check your work, make sure the hypothesis, experimental steps, and a summary of results (or expected results) are clear. Some of these elements may be part of the question, while others you may need to provide in your answer.

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3.2.1: The Secrets of the Q and A's

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3.2.1: The Secrets of the Q and A's

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You can gain even more confidence in your test-taking abilities by understanding the different kinds of questions an instructor may ask and applying the following proven strategies for answering them. Most instructors will likely use various conventional types of questions. Here are some tips for handling the most common types.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- Read the instructions carefully to determine if there may be more than one right answer. If there are multiple right answers, does the instructor expect you to choose just one, or do you need to mark all correct options?
- Read each question carefully and try to answer it in your head *before* reading the answer options. Then consider *all* the options. Eliminate first the options that are clearly incorrect. Compare the remaining answers with your own answer before choosing one and marking your paper.
- Look for clue words that hint that certain option answers might be correct or incorrect. Absolute words like “never,” “always,” “every,” or “none” are rarely found in a correct option. Less absolute words like “usually,” “often,” or “rarely” are regularly found in correct options.
- Be on the lookout for the word “not” in the stem phrase and in the answer choice options; it is an easy word to miss if you are reading too quickly, but it completely changes the meaning of the possible statements.

True-or-False Questions

- Most of the tips for multiple-choice questions apply here as well. Be particularly aware of the words “never,” “always,” “every,” “none,” and “not” because they can determine the correct answer.
- Answer the questions that are obvious to you first. Then go back to statements that require more thought.
- If the question is stated in the positive, restate it to yourself in the negative by adding the word “not” or “never.” Does the new statement sound truer or more false?
- If you still are unsure whether a statement is true or false and must guess, choose “true” because most tests include more true statements than false (but don’t guess if a wrong answer penalizes you more than one left blank).

Matching Columns

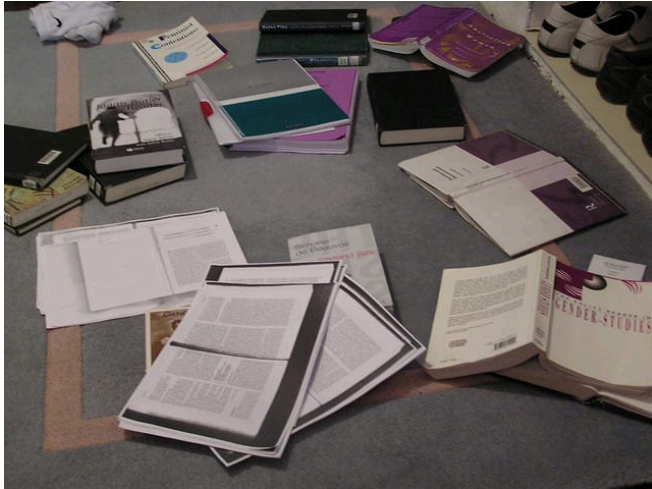
- Start by looking at the two columns to be matched. Is there an equal number of items in both columns? If they are not equal, do you have to match some items in the shorter column to two or more items in the longer column, or can you leave some items unmatched? Read the directions to be sure.
- If one column has a series of single words to be matched to phrases in the other column, read all the phrases first, then all the single words before trying to make any matches. Now go back and read each phrase and find the word that best suits the phrase.
- If both columns have single words to be matched, look to cut down the number of potential matches by grouping them by parts of speech (nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, etc.).
- As always, start by making the matches that are obvious to you, and then work on the ones that require more thought. Mark off all items you have already used so you can easily see which words or phrases still remain to be matched.

Short Answer Questions

- Short answer questions are designed for you to recall and provide some very *specific* information (unlike essay questions, which also ask you to apply critical thinking to that information). When you read the question, ask yourself what exactly the instructor wants to know. Keep your answers short and *specific*.

Essay Questions

Figure



An essay test requires careful planning of what you want to write.

Tim Riley – [Essay time \(Postmodern Feminism\): My Floor](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

- Essay questions are used by instructors to evaluate your thinking and reasoning applied to the material covered in a course. Good essay answers are based on *your* thoughts, supported by examples from classes and reading assignments.
- Careful planning is critical to answering essay questions effectively. Note how many essay questions you have to answer and how difficult each question seems. Then allocate your time accordingly.
- Read the question carefully and underline or circle keywords. Watch for words that describe the instructor's expectations for your response (see Table 2.1 "Words to Watch for in Essay Questions").
- If time allows, organize your thoughts by creating a quick outline for your essay. This helps ensure that you don't leave out key points, and if you run out of time, it may pick up a few points for your grade. Jot down specific information you might want to use, such as names, dates, and places.
- Introduce your essay answer, but get right to the point. Remember that the instructor will be grading dozens of papers and avoid "filler" text that does not add value to your answer. For example, rather than writing, "In our study of the Civil War, it is helpful to consider the many facets that lead to conflict, especially the economic factors that help explain this important turning point in our nation's history," write a more direct and concise statement like this: "Economic factors help explain the start of the Civil War."
- Write neatly and watch your grammar and spelling. Allow time to proofread your essay. You want your instructor to want to read your essay, not dread it. Remember that grading essays is largely subjective, and a favorable impression can lead to more favorable grading.
- Be sure to answer all parts of the question. Essay questions often have more than one part. Remember, too, that essay questions often have multiple acceptable answers.

Table 2.1 Words to Watch for in Essay Questions

Word	What It Means	What the Instructor Is Looking For
Analyze	Break concept into key parts	Don't just list the parts; show how they work together and illustrate any patterns.
Compare	Show similarities (and sometimes differences) between two or more concepts or ideas	Define the similarities and clearly describe how the items or ideas are similar. Do these similarities lead to similar results or effects? Note that this word is often combined with "contrast." If so, make sure you do both.

Word	What It Means	What the Instructor Is Looking For
Contrast	Show differences between two or more concepts or ideas	Define the differences and clearly describe how the items or ideas are different. How do these differences result in different outcomes? Note that this word is often combined with “compare.” If so, make sure you do both.
Critique	Judge and analyze	Explain what is wrong—and right—about a concept. Include your own judgments, supported by evidence and quotes from experts that support your point of view.
Define	Describe the meaning of a word, phrase, or concept	Define the concept or idea as your instructor did in class—but use your own words. If your definition differs from what the instructor presented, support your difference with evidence. Keep this essay short. Examples can help illustrate a definition, but remember that examples alone are <i>not</i> a definition.
Discuss	Explain or review	Define the key questions around the issue to be discussed and then answer them. Another approach is to define pros and cons on the issue and compare and contrast them. In either case, explore all relevant data and information.
Explain	Clarify, give reasons for something	Clarity is key for these questions. Outline your thoughts carefully. Proofread, edit, proofread, and proofread again! Good explanations are often lost in too many words.
Illustrate	Offer examples	Use examples from class material or reading assignments. Compare and contrast them to other examples you might come up with from additional reading or real life.
Prove	Provide evidence and arguments that something is true	Instructors who include this prompt in an exam question have often proven the hypothesis or other concepts in their class lectures. Think about the kind of evidence the instructor used and apply similar types of processes and data.
Summarize	Give a brief, precise description of an idea or concept	Keep it short, but cover all key points. This is one essay prompt where examples should not be included unless the instructions specifically ask for them. (For example, “Summarize the steps of the learning cycle and give examples of the main strategies you should apply in each one.”)

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3.3: Using Test Results

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So far, we have focused on how to study for and take tests effectively. This section discusses how to *use* test results to their greatest benefit. Some of your most important learning begins when your graded test paper is returned to you. Your first reaction, of course, is to see what grade you received and how you did compared with your classmates. This is a natural reaction.

Make sure you listen to the instructor as the papers are returned. What is the instructor saying about the test? Is there a particular point everyone had trouble with? Does the instructor generally think everyone did well? The instructor's comments at this point may give you important information about what you should study more, about the value of review sessions, and even about possible questions for the next exam.

Although you may be tempted to throw away the exam, don't. It is a very helpful tool for the next phase of preparing for learning. This is a three-step process, beginning with evaluating your results.

Evaluating Your Test Results

When you receive your test back, sit quietly and take a close look at it. What questions did you get wrong? What kind of mistakes were they? (See Table 2.2 "Exam Errors and How to Correct Them".) Do you see a pattern? What questions did you get right? What were your strengths? What can you learn from the instructor's comments?

Now think of the way in which you prepared for the exam and the extent to which you applied the exam strategies described earlier in this chapter. Were you prepared for the exam? Did you study the right material? What surprised you? Did you read the entire test before starting? Did your time allocation work well, or were you short of time on certain parts of the exam?

Table 2.2 Exam Errors and How to Correct Them

Type of Error	Examples	Corrective Steps
Study and Preparation Errors	I did not study the material for that question (enough).	Practice predicting possible questions better.
	I ran out of time.	Join a study group.
	I did not prepare enough.	Read the entire test before starting. Allocate your time.
Focus Errors or Carelessness	I did not read the directions carefully.	Allocate exam time carefully.
	I confused terms or concepts that I actually know well.	Give yourself time to read carefully and think before answering a question.
	I misread or misunderstood the question.	
Content Errors	I studied the material but couldn't make it work with the question	Seek additional help from the instructor.
	I didn't understand what the instructor wanted.	Go to all classes, labs, and review sessions.
	I confused terms or concepts.	Join a study group.
		Check and practice your active reading and listening skills.
		Schedule regular study time for this course.
Mechanical Errors	The instructor misread my writing.	Slow down! Don't rush through the exam. Take the time to do things right the first time.

Type of Error	Examples	Corrective Steps
	I didn't erase a wrong answer completely (on a computer-graded answer sheet).	
	I forgot to go back to a question I had skipped over.	
	I miscopied some calculations or facts from my worksheet.	

Based on your analysis of your test, identify the kind of corrective steps you should take to improve your learning and test performance. Implement those steps as you begin your preparation for your next class. If you don't learn from your mistakes, you are doomed to repeat them; if you don't learn from your successes, it will be harder to repeat them.

Correcting Your Mistakes

The second step in making your test work for you is to correct your wrong answers. The last time you wrote the information (when you took the test), you created a link to wrong information in your memory, so that must be corrected.

- For multiple-choice questions, write out the question stem with the correct answer to form a single correct sentence or phrase.
- For true-or-false questions, write the full statement if it is true; if it is false, reword it in such a way that it is true (such as by inserting the word "not"). Then write the new statement.
- For math and science questions involving calculations, redo the entire solution with the calculations written out fully.
- You need not rewrite an entire essay question if you did not do well, but you should create a new outline for what would be a correct answer. Make sure you incorporate any ideas triggered by your instructor's comments.
- When you have rewritten all your answers, read them all out loud before incorporating your new answers in your notes.

Integrating Your Test into Your Study Guide

Your corrected quizzes and midterm exams are an important study tool for final exams. Make sure you file them with your notes for the study unit. Take the time to annotate your notes based on the exam. Pay particular attention to any gaps in your notes on topics that appeared in the quiz or exam. Research those points in your text or online and complete your notes. Review your exams throughout the term (not just before the final) to be sure you cement the course material into your memory.

When you prepare for the final exam, start by reviewing your quizzes and other tests to predict the kinds of questions the instructor may ask on the final. This will help focus your final studying when you have a large amount of coursework to cover.

If You Don't Get Your Test Back

If your instructor chooses not to return tests to students, make an appointment to see the instructor soon after the test to review it and your performance. Take notes on what you had trouble with and the expected answers. Add these notes into your study guide. Make sure you don't lose out on the opportunity to learn from your results.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. Take time to examine your notes for each course you are now taking. Are your exams and quizzes part of that package? If not, include them now. Review them this week.
2. Compare your exams across two or three courses. What kinds of mistakes do you make on a regular basis? Is there a trend you need to correct?

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4: VOCABULARY

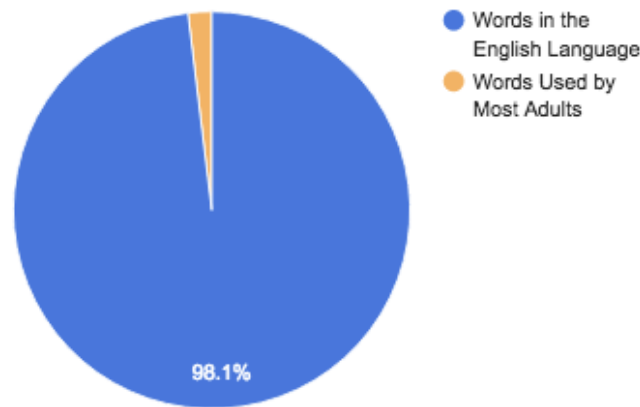
4.1: Vocabulary

4.2: Building Your Vocabulary

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4.1: Vocabulary

The English language includes over **1,025,000** words. The average English-speaking adult has a working vocabulary of about 20,000 words. That means most of us have about a million words that we could potentially add to our vocabulary!



Figure

Having a strong vocabulary makes reading more meaningful and enjoyable, and reading helps build a strong vocabulary. There are various other ways to pick up words, though.

Stuck on a Word? Get Clues ... Context Clues!

[Edit section](#)

Sometimes we misunderstand a sentence because it contains a key word that we don't know. When that happens, we can try using the **context clues**, or words around the unfamiliar word, to help us figure out the meaning. How do we do that? Read the boxes below slowly.

For busy adults, learning new words may seem daunting, or discouraging. However, many people find that learning the meaning of new words and expanding what they know are enlightening experiences that make them more aware of the world's ideas.

Do you know what the words **daunting** and **enlightening** mean? If not, how could you figure them out? Try looking at the **context clues**— the surrounding words or phrases that give hints about the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Check the explanation below.

For busy adults, learning new words may seem *daunting*, or discouraging. However, many people find that learning the meaning of new words and expanding what they know are *enlightening* experiences that make them more aware of the world's ideas.

In the first sentence, the phrase “or discouraging” comes right after **daunting** to explain its meaning. Another word for **daunting** is *discouraging*.

How do you figure out what **enlightening** means? The context clues “expanding what they know” and “more aware of the world's ideas” can help you. Based on those surrounding phrases, **enlightening** must mean adding new knowledge to your life.



Figure

Dictionaries

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Should you stop reading to look words up?

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It depends. Looking up words slows you down, and you may be able to make reasonable sense of their context without having to.

You have to decide how important a word seems to be. Do you feel you are missing something by not knowing it? Does it keep appearing? If you just carry on reading, the word may become clearer as you experience it being used (after all, that's how we get to know the meaning of most words).

Sometimes it's not one particular word that's difficult, but a string of them. For example, when I read "clinical depression, assessed professionally through population surveys," I had to slow down. Having taken in the meaning, it seemed to me that "depression" was the main word I needed to pay attention to, so I underlined it.



Figure

One way to tackle the challenge of unfamiliar words is to use a dictionary. You could use a traditional printed dictionary, or an

online dictionary, or both. A printed dictionary is easy to keep beside you wherever you happen to be reading. But an online dictionary holds the advantage when it comes to looking up words quickly as you can look up a word in three or four online dictionaries simultaneously, to compare the definitions they offer.

You also have a choice between using a *general* dictionary, or a *specialist* dictionary for the subject that you are studying. How helpful you find either will depend on your subject, so it is worth doing a little exploring to find out. Note down a few “difficult” words from one of your main textbooks. Then visit a bookshop, or go online and find a few dictionaries. Look your words up to see if they are included and whether the definitions make sense to you.

Dictionaries are an invaluable resource but don’t expect them to be perfect. A general dictionary will often not include key words from your subject area, or will give a definition which is misleading because the nuances of meaning are not right for your subject. On the other hand, specialist dictionary definitions can be difficult to understand.

Enriching Your Vocabulary

This quick video suggests a practical guide to absorbing new words into your vocabulary. ([Download a transcript for this video here \(.docx file\).](#))

And this video suggests another way to do the same. ([Download a transcript for this video here \(.docx file\).](#))

Self-Check

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4.2: Building Your Vocabulary

Both leaders and advertisers inspire people to take action by choosing their words carefully and using them precisely. A good vocabulary is essential for success in any role that involves communication, and just about every role in life requires good communication skills. This section on vocabulary is included because of the connections between vocabulary building and reading. Building your vocabulary will make your reading easier, and reading is the best way to build your vocabulary.

Learning new words can be fun and does not need to involve tedious rote memorization of word lists. The first step, as in any other aspect of the learning cycle, is to prepare yourself to learn. Consciously decide that you want to improve your vocabulary; decide you want to be a student of words. Work to become more aware of the words around you: the words you hear, the words you read, the words you say, and those you write.

Do you have a lazy vocabulary? Wake it up with the “lazy speech” exercise.

Activity: Lazy Speech

Recruit a friend you spend a lot of time with. Give them an index card with the following words written on it and ask them to keep a tally of the number of times you say these words sometime when you are together for an hour or more. If you have a small recorder, give it to the person and ask them to record you at a time you are not aware of it.

- Ummm or Uhh
- Like
- They
- You know
- OK
- Yeah
- Ohmigawd

Include in this list any other words, including expletives, that you may be using without thinking.

Are there words you constantly overuse? Were you surprised at how often you used some of these expressions? Now that you are aware of the frequency you use certain expressions, what strategies can you use to control or substitute more articulate and expressive words for them?

Building a stronger vocabulary should start with a strong foundation of healthy word use. Just as you can bring your overuse of certain words to your conscious awareness in the previous activity, think about the kinds of words you should be using more frequently. Some of the words you might consciously practice are actually very simple ones you already know but significantly underuse or use imprecisely. For example, many students say he or she “goes” instead of he or she “says.” If you take it a step further, you can consider more accurate choices still. Perhaps, he “claims” or she “argues.” Maybe he “insists” or “assumes.” Or it could be that she “believes” or she “suggests.” This may seem like a small matter, but it’s important from both a reader’s and a writer’s perspective to distinguish among the different meanings. And you can develop greater awareness by bringing some of these words into your speech.

These habits are easier to put into action if you have more and better material to draw upon: a stronger vocabulary. The following tips will help you gain and correctly use more words.

- **Be on the lookout for new words.** Most will come to you as you read, but they may also appear in an instructor’s lecture, a class discussion, or a casual conversation with a friend. They may pop up in random places like billboards, menus, or even online ads!
- **Write down the new words you encounter, along with the sentences in which they were used.** Do this in your notes with new words from a class or reading assignment. If a new word does not come from a class, you can write it on just about anything, but make sure you write it. Many word lovers carry a small notepad or a stack of index cards specifically for this purpose.
- **Infer the meaning of the word.** The context in which the word is used may give you a good clue about its meaning. Do you

recognize a common word root in the word? (Check [Table 5.3 “Common Latin and Greek Word Roots”](#) for common roots.) What do you think it means?

- **Look up the word in a dictionary.** Do this as soon as possible (but only after inferring the meaning). When you are reading, you should have a dictionary at hand for this purpose. In other situations, do this within a couple hours, definitely during the same day. How does the dictionary definition compare with what you inferred?
- **Write the word in a sentence, ideally one that is relevant to you.** If the word has more than one definition, write a sentence for each.
- **Say the word out loud** and then say the definition and the sentence you wrote.
- **Use the word.** Find occasion to use the word in speech or writing over the next two days.
- **Schedule a weekly review** with yourself to go over your new words and their meanings.

Table 5.3 Common Latin and Greek Word Roots

Root	Meaning	Examples
auto	self	automatic, automobile
bi	two	bicycle, biplane
bio	life	biography, biology
chrono	time	synchronize, chronicle
dict	say	predict, dictate
gen	give birth	generate, genetic
geo	earth	geology, geography, geometry
log	thought	biology, logic, pathology
manu	hand	manufacture, manual
phil	love	philosophy, anglophile
port	carry	transport, portable
sub	under	submarine, subtract
vac	empty	vacuum, evacuate

Where Have You Been All My Life?

The following are some fun ways to find new words:

- Read.
- When you look up a word in the dictionary, look at other interesting words on the same page.
- Solve crossword puzzles.
- Play word games like Scrabble, Boggle, or Pictionary.
- Watch movies.
- Listen to speeches and attend lectures.
- Go to comedy clubs.
- Have discussions (not just casual conversations) with friends.
- Read some more.

Exercise 1

1. Which words do you habitually overuse? Do your friends overuse the same words? How can you collaborate to correct that

overuse?

2. During the course of the day, find five new words in five different places. What were those words, and where did you uncover them?

3. What do the words “manuscript,” “scribe,” and “scribble” have in common? Can you detect the same root in these words?

4. What do you think the root means?

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5: GETTING THE POINT

5.1: Topics, Supporting Details, and Main Ideas

5.2: Identifying Thesis Statements and Topic Sentences

5.3: Summarizing a Text

5.4: Paraphrasing

5.5: Evidence and Support in an Argument

5.6: Identifying Relationships between Ideas

5.1: Topics, Supporting Details, and Main Ideas

Topics

Before you try to identify the main idea of a reading, it is best to identify the topic. The **topic** is the general subject of the reading, and it is not as specific as the main idea; it is usually only a few words, not a complete sentence. To identify the topic, ask yourself, "Who or what is this reading selection about?" There are some clues within a reading that can help you answer the question:

- **Headings and Titles**
- **Pictures**
- **Repeated words and phrases**

Once you think you've identified the topic, make sure it is one that is general and not too specific. For example, below are some ideas that are better suited topics because of their generality, whereas the other ideas are too specific to be considered topics.

GENERAL (TOPICS)	SPECIFIC
Tips for exams	Learn to take exams effectively.
College papers	Learn to write college papers.
Food allergies	There are several types of food allergies.
College majors	Understand different college majors.

Supporting Details and Main Ideas

Now that you've identified the topic, you are ready to identify the main idea of a reading by looking at the supporting details. The **supporting details** of a reading are information (facts, examples, support) that further explains the topic, and that directly relates to the main idea. Sometimes, the supporting details will include transitional words and phrases to signal their significance.

EXAMPLE:

My grandmother's 7-layer cookie recipe is one that must be followed exactly to ensure a successful turnout. First, pour melted butter into a baking dish. Next, sprinkle finely crushed graham cracker crumbs on top of the melted butter. Afterward, evenly distribute chocolate chips and butterscotch chips in the baking dish. Next, sprinkle shredded coconut overtop the chips. Then, evenly pour one can of sweetened condensed milk over the previous ingredients. Lastly, sprinkle chopped walnuts on top of the milk. After baking at 350 degrees for 30 minutes and allowing the cookies to cool completely, they are ready to be cut and enjoyed.

Topic- 7-layer cookies

Main Idea- Following the steps to a 7-layer cookie recipe in precise order ensures a successful turnout.

Supporting Details- in green

Main ideas that are explicitly stated are easier to identify than those that are **implied** (not directly stated). Main ideas may be stated in the beginning, middle, end, or beginning and end of a reading selection. Much of this will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

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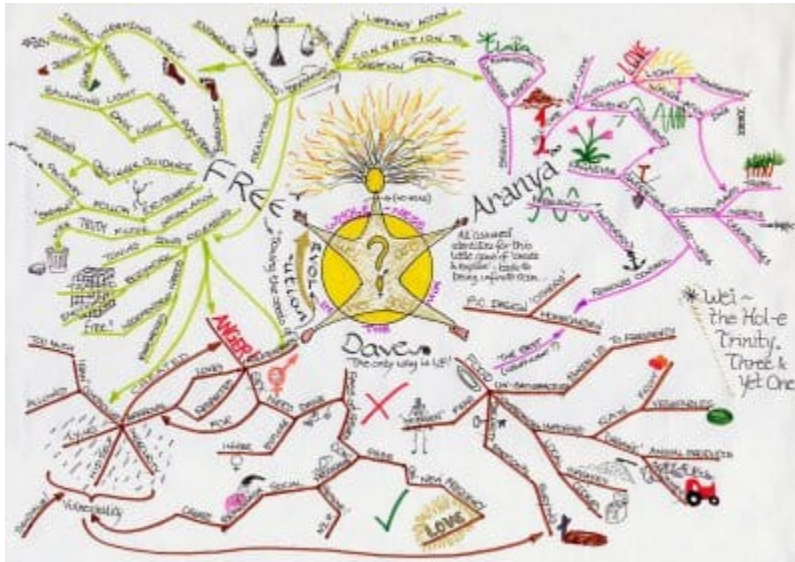
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5.2: Identifying Thesis Statements and Topic Sentences

Being able to identify the purpose and thesis of a text, as you're reading it, takes practice. This section will offer you that practice.

One fun strategy for developing a deeper understanding the material you're reading is to make a visual "map" of the ideas. Mind maps, whether hand-drawn or done through computer programs, can be fun to make, and help put all the ideas of an essay you're reading in one easy-to-read format.

Your understanding of what the "central" element of the mind map is might change as you read and re-read. Developing the central idea of your mind map is a great way to help you determine the reading's thesis.



Figure

- Hand-drawn Mind Map

Locating Explicit and Implicit Thesis Statements

[Edit section](#)

In academic writing, the thesis is often **explicit**: it is included as a sentence as part of the text. It might be near the beginning of the work, but not always—some types of academic writing leave the thesis until the conclusion.

Journalism and reporting also rely on explicit thesis statements that appear very early in the piece—the first paragraph or even the first sentence.

Works of literature, on the other hand, usually do not contain a specific sentence that sums up the core concept of the writing. However, readers should finish the piece with a good understanding of what the work was trying to convey. This is what's called an **implicit** thesis statement: the primary point of the reading is conveyed indirectly, in multiple locations throughout the work. (In literature, this is also referred to as the *theme* of the work.)

Academic writing sometimes relies on implicit thesis statements, as well.

This video offers excellent guidance in identifying the thesis statement of a work, no matter if it's explicit or implicit.

YouTube Video

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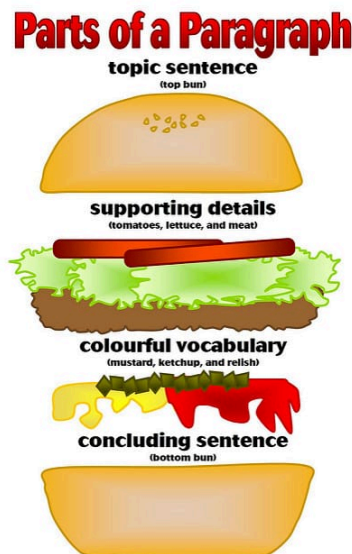


Topic Sentences

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We've learned that a **thesis statement** conveys the primary message of an entire piece of text. Now, let's look at the next level of important sentences in a piece of text: **topic sentences** in each paragraph.

A useful metaphor would be to think of the thesis statement of a text as a general: it controls all the major decisions of the writing. There is only one thesis statement in a text. Topic sentences, in this relationship, serve as captains: they organize and sub-divide the overall goals of a writing into individual components. Each paragraph will have a topic sentence.



Figure

It might be helpful to think of a topic sentence as working in two directions simultaneously. It relates the paragraph to the essay's thesis, and thereby acts as a signpost for the argument of the paper as a whole, but it also defines the scope of the paragraph itself. For example, consider the following topic sentence:

Many characters in Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun* have one particular dream in which they are following, though the character Walter pursues his most aggressively.

If this sentence controls the paragraph that follows, then all sentences in the paragraph must relate in some way to Walter and the pursuit of his dream.

Topic sentences often act like tiny thesis statements. Like a thesis statement, a topic sentence makes a claim of some sort. As the thesis statement is the unifying force in the essay, so the topic sentence must be the unifying force in the paragraph. Further, as is the case with the thesis statement, when the topic sentence makes a claim, the paragraph which follows must expand, describe, or prove it in some way. Topic sentences make a point and give reasons or examples to support it.

The following diagram illustrates how a topic sentence can provide more focus to the general topic at hand.

Placement of Topic Sentences

What if I told you that the topic sentence doesn't necessarily need to be at the beginning? This might be contrary to what you've learned in previous English or writing classes, and that's okay. Certainly, when authors announce a topic clearly and early on in a paragraph, their readers are likely to grasp their idea and to make the connections that they want them to make.

However, when authors are writing for a more sophisticated academic audience—that is an audience of college-educated readers—they will often use more sophisticated organizational strategies to build and reveal ideas in their writing. One way to think about a topic sentence, is that it presents the broadest view of what authors want their readers to understand. This is to say that they're providing a broad statement that either announces or brings into focus the purpose or the meaning for the details of the paragraph. If the topic sentence is seen as the broadest view, then every supporting detail will bring a narrower—or more specific—view of the same topic.

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

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

Topic Sentence-Details-Topic Sentence

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

Topic Sentence-Details

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

Note

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

Details-Topic Sentence-Details

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

Explicit and Implicit Topic Sentences

Similar to thesis statements, topic sentences may be explicit or implicit.

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

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

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

EXERCISE 1: Identify the Topic and Focus

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

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5.3: Summarizing a Text



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

A good **summary** accomplishes the following:

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Summarizing a Text

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

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

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

Being able to accurately summarize a reading to someone else is the ultimate demonstration that you understand the reading's contents.

Consider this fun example of a summary from the "30-Second Bunny Theater" series: [Star Wars in 30 Seconds and Re-enacted by Bunnies](#).

This recap of the well-known movie *Star Wars* is a blend of major plot points and fan-favorite scenes. In other words, it conveys all the major points of the film. It also adds a couple of supporting details to capture the flavor of the entire movie. Plus bunny ears.

Major vs. Minor Ideas

The following presentation offers advice about distinguishing major ideas in a text from minor ones. When you're asked to write a summary of something you read, you'll want to focus only on the major ideas, since minor ideas aren't generally included in summaries.

[Major and minor details](#) from [Nichole Keith](#)

On slide 6, can you identify which are the major ideas of the paragraph, and which are the minor ones?

Summarizing

Once you've identified a text's thesis statement and major details, you'll be prepared to draft a summary of that text.

Remember, the goal of a summary is to convey the overall meaning of the text to someone who has not read it. You are the expert about this text, and you're sharing your expertise with others through your summary.

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5.4: Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing a Text's Thesis Statement



Figure

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

Paraphrasing is a skill that asks you to capture the *idea* of a text, without using any of the same words. This is harder to do than it might first appear. Like advanced reading skills, it takes practice to do well.

As you paraphrase, keep the following tips in mind:

- **Paraphrases are roughly the same length as the original text.** If the thesis sentence is a medium-length sentence, your paraphrase will also be a medium-length sentence (though it doesn't have to have exactly the same number of words).
- **Paraphrases use entirely distinct wording from the original text.** Common small words like "the" and "and" are perfectly acceptable, of course, but try to use completely different nouns and verbs. If needed, you can quote short snippets, 1-2 words, if you feel the precise words are necessary.
- **Paraphrases keep the same meaning and tone as the original text.** Make sure that anyone reading your paraphrase would understand the same thing, as if they had read the original text you paraphrased.

Why paraphrase?

1. To Demonstrate Understanding

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

2. To Provide Support

[Edit section](#)

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

tip

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

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

The sentence that follows, though, says this:

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

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

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

What Makes Something a Paraphrase?

[Edit section](#)

A paraphrase

- Is in your own words.
- Is not condensed.
- Avoids personal opinion.
- Is completely rephrased from the original.

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

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

How Should I Organize a Paraphrase?

[Edit section](#)

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

- Introduce the author and original text, just as you would for a summary.
- If there is relevant context, mention that as well.
- Then, restate the part of the original text that you want to use *into your own original language and sentence structures*.

- Include a parenthetical citation (if appropriate) at the end of the paraphrased material. (To learn how to do this correctly, see the discussion of in-text citation in “[Crediting and Citing Your Sources](#),” part of the “Using Sources Correctly” section of this text.)
- After delivering and citing the paraphrased material, reconnect that information to your own topic and point.

Check Your Understanding: Creating a Paraphrase

[Edit section](#)

Here is a brief passage from Sarah Boxer’s article in The Atlantic, “[An Artist for the Instagram Age](#)”: “The fact that some folks have managed to make the scene while others get left out in the cold is integral to the excitement of participatory art. The thrill is akin to exotic travel, or getting to see Hamilton. Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs.”

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

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

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

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5.5: Evidence and Support in an Argument

Much of academic reading requires readers to understand, analyze, and evaluate an author's **claim** and support for that claim. The *point* and *claim* can also be thought of as *thesis*, *main idea*, or *topic sentence*, as discussed in previous sections. An author's claim may be one of the following: a claim of value, a claim of policy, or a claim of fact. A **claim of value** attempts to persuade readers to approve or disapprove of something. Key words that signal this type of claim are *better*, *worse*, *more...than*, *right*, *wrong*, and *beautiful*. A **claim of policy** is one that attempts to persuade readers to take action. Key words that signal this type of claim are *should*, *ought to*, and *must*. Lastly, a **claim of fact** is one that presents facts to persuade readers that something existed, currently exists, or will exist. Some key words that indicate this type of claim are *leads to*, *causes*, *improves*, and *destroys*.

Once you can identify the claim that the author is trying to make, you can start to closely look at the types of support the author uses for their claim.

Types of support might include:

- Reasons.
- Personal anecdotes.
- Facts.
- Statistics.
- Quotations from experts.
- Narratives.
- Case studies.
- Testimonies.
- Examples.
- Analogies and Logical Reasoning.
- Experiments.

Evaluating Support

After identifying the supporting details and the types of support an author uses, it is crucial to make sure that those supporting details are solid and convincing. Below is the **STAR Method** for evaluating an author's support for their claim.

Measure	Question	Examples and Notes
Sufficiency	Is there <i>enough</i> cited evidence to support the conclusion?	Generally, only “strongly” and not “weakly” support more controversial a claim is, the more evidence an audience to accept it. If the evidence is not qualify the claim, by stating that something is ti
Typicality	Is the cited evidence typical or representative?	If an author makes a claim about a whole group biased sample of that group, the evidence is nc relying just on personal experiences (anecdotal by citing only the parts that support a conclusio
Accuracy	Is the cited evidence up to date and accurate?	Authors using polls, studies and statistics must biased way and also ask whether the sample wa population so that results were outside the “ma is too small or not well chosen, results may be r random variation.)

Relevance	Is the cited evidence directly relevant to the claim(s) it is being used to support?	An author may supply lots of evidence, but the evidence must be relevant to what the person is actually claiming. If the author may need to modify or qualify the claim, the claim is indefensible.
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An author may also **refute**, or disprove, opposing viewpoints in their argument by providing evidence that negates opposing arguments. This may be accomplished in various ways:

- **Refutation through Logic:** an author may provide evidence that convincingly negates an opposing argument, or by providing more current and credible evidence.
- **Refutation through Evidence:** an author may refute an opposing argument by deconstructing it in such a way that shows the inconsistencies within that opposing argument.
- **Refutation through Exposing Discrepancies:** an author may refute an opposing argument by showcasing how that argument is missing core essential elements related to the issue at hand.

EXERCISE 1:

Directions: Take some time to read the [article](#) about food deserts and answer the following:

Preview the Article

- What is suggested by the title of the article?
- Who is the author of the article?
- When was the article written/published?
- What do you already know about the issue?

Actively Read the Article

- What is the issue presented in the article?
- What is the author's claim (i.e. argument, point)?
- What type of claim does the author make?
- What support does the author provide for their claim?
- What type(s) of support does the author include?
- Using the STAR Method above, answer each question in the Question column of the table (refer to the Examples and Notes column for assistance).
- Does the author provide opposing viewpoints? If so, which one(s) do they include?
- Of the opposing viewpoints provided, does the author refute any? If so, which one(s) are refuted, and how does the author refute them?

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5.6: Identifying Relationships between Ideas



Figure

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So you can identify a main idea and the related supporting ideas, but how can you be sure that you understand the relationships between them? Can you determine how the ideas are tied to each other? One to identify these relationships is through the use of **transitions** between ideas. Transitions form logical connections between the ideas presented in an essay or paragraph, and they give readers clues that reveal how an author wants you to think about (process, organize, or use) the topics presented. Transitions are important because they signal the order of ideas, highlight relationships, unify concepts, and let readers know what’s coming next or remind them about what’s already been covered.

Sentence-Level Transitions

[Edit section](#)

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

To Show Similarity

[Edit section](#)

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

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

To Show Contrast

[Edit section](#)

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

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

To Exemplify or Illustrate

[Edit section](#)

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

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

To Show Cause and Effect

[Edit section](#)

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

Other connecting words that show cause and effect include **therefore**, **since**, **so**, **as a result**, and **thus**.

To Show Additional Support

[Edit section](#)

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

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

Identifying Transitions between Paragraphs and Sections

[Edit section](#)

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

Look for Signposts

[Edit section](#)

Signposts are words or phrases that indicate where an author is in the process of organizing an idea; for example, signposts might indicate that an author is introducing a new concept, that they are summarizing an idea, or that they are concluding their thoughts. Some of the most common signposts include words and phrases such as **first**, **then**, **next**, **finally**, **in sum**, and **in conclusion**.

Look for Forward-Looking Sentences at the End of Paragraphs

[Edit section](#)

Sometimes, as an author concludes a paragraph, they might want to give their readers a hint about what's coming next. For example, imagine that you're reading an essay about the benefits of trees to the environment and the author has just wrapped up a paragraph about how trees absorb pollutants and provide oxygen. They might conclude with a **forward-looking sentence** like this: "Trees benefits to local air quality are important, but surely they have more to offer our communities than clean air." This might conclude a paragraph (or series of paragraphs) and then prepare their readers for additional paragraphs to come that cover the topics of trees' shade value and ability to slow water evaporation on hot summer days.

Look for Backward-Looking Sentences at the Beginning of Paragraphs

[Edit section](#)

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

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6: INFERENCES

6.1: Figurative Language

6.2: Making Inferences

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6.1: Figurative Language

When people say something is a **“figure of speech,”** they are referring to a word or phrase that deviates from expectations in some way in meaning or usage (Yaguello, 1998). Figurative language is the result of breaking semantic rules, but in a way that typically enhances meaning or understanding rather than diminishes it. To understand figurative language, a person has to be familiar with the semantic rules of a language and also with social norms and patterns within a cultural and/or language group, which makes it difficult for nonnative speakers to grasp. Figurative language has the ability to convey much meaning in fewer words, because some of the meaning lies in the context of usage (what a listener can imply by the deviation from semantic norms) and in the listener (how the listener makes meaning by connecting the figurative language to his or her personal experience). Some examples of figurative speech include simile, metaphor, and personification.

A **simile** is a direct comparison of two things using the words *like* or *as*. Similes can be very explicit for the purpose of conveying a specific meaning and can help increase clarity and lead people to personally connect to a meaning since they have to visualize the comparison in their mind. For example, Forrest Gump’s famous simile, “Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get,” conjures up feelings of uncertainty and excitement. More direct similes like “I slept like a baby” and “That bread was hard as a rock” do not necessarily stir the imagination but still offer an alternative way of expressing something.

A **metaphor** is an implicit comparison of two things that are not alike and/or are not typically associated. They become meaningful as people realize the speaker’s purpose for relating the two seemingly disparate ideas. Metaphors are figurative devices that can make our writing and speaking richer, but they require a person to balance creative associations among ideas with the common rules of the language if people are expected to figure out the meaning behind the association. A speaker must have the linguistic knowledge and insight to realize when a nonliteral use of words or ideas will be more meaningful than a literal and conventional use of those words. Metaphors challenge the imagination, which can cause each person to make sense of the metaphor in his or her own way (Olbricht, 1968).

In 1946, just after World War II ended, Winston Churchill stated the following in a speech: “An iron curtain has descended across the continent of Europe.” Even though people knew there was no literal heavy metal curtain that had been lowered over Europe, the concepts of iron being strong and impenetrable and curtains being a divider combined to create a stirring and powerful image of a continent divided by the dark events of the previous years (Carpenter, 1999). Some communication scholars argue that metaphors serve a much larger purpose and function to structure our human thought processes (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The metaphor “time is money” doesn’t just represent an imaginative connection; it shapes our social realities. We engage in specific actions that “save time,” “spend time,” or “waste time” because we have been socialized to see time as a resource.

Many metaphors spring from our everyday experiences. For example, many objects have been implicitly compared to human body parts; for example, we say a clock has hands and a face. **Personification** refers to the attribution of human qualities or characteristics of other living things to nonhuman objects or abstract concepts. This can be useful when trying to make something abstract more concrete and can create a sense of urgency or “realness” out of something that is hard for people to conceive. Personification has been used successfully in public awareness campaigns because it allows people to identify with something they think might not be relevant to them, as you can see in the following examples: “Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a sleeping enemy that lives in many people and will one day wake up and demand your attention if you do not address it now.” “Crystal meth is a stalking your children whether you see it or not. You never know where it’s hiding.”

CONNOTATION and DENOTATION

Words have denotative and connotative meanings. **Denotation** refers to definitions that are accepted by the language group as a whole, or the dictionary definition of a word. For example, the denotation of the word *cowboy* is a man who takes care of cattle. Another denotation is a reckless and/or independent person. A more abstract word, like *change*, would be more difficult to understand due to the multiple denotations.

Connotation refers to definitions that are based on emotion- or experience-based associations people have with a word. To go back to our previous words, *change* can have positive or negative connotations depending on a person’s experiences. A person who just ended a long-term relationship may think of change as good or bad depending on what he or she thought about his or her former partner.

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6.2: Making Inferences

Making **inferences** is a comprehension strategy used by proficient readers to “read between the lines,” make connections, and draw conclusions about the text’s meaning and purpose.

You already make inferences all of the time. For example, imagine you go over to a friend’s house and they point at the sofa and say, “Don’t sit there, Cindy came over with her baby again.” What could you logically conclude?

First, you know there must be a reason not to sit where your friend is pointing. Next, the reason not to sit there is related to the fact that Cindy just visited with her baby. You don’t know what exactly happened, but you can make an inference and don’t need to ask any more questions to know that you do not want to sit there.

Practice Making Inferences

Imagine you witness the following unrelated situations—what can you infer about each one?

1. You see a woman pushing a baby stroller down the street.
2. You are at a corner and see two parked cars at an intersection, and the driver in back starts honking his horn.
3. You are walking down the street, and suddenly a dog comes running out of an opened door with its tail between its legs.
 - For the first, you probably came up with something simple, such as there was a baby in the stroller.
 - For the second, you might have inferred that the first car should have started moving, or was waiting too long at the corner and holding up the second car.
 - For the third, you could reasonably guess that the dog had done something wrong and was afraid to get punished.

You do not know for 100% certainty that these inferences are true. If you checked 100 strollers, 99 times you would find a baby, but maybe one time you would find something else, like groceries.

Making Inferences as You Read

To make inferences from reading, take two or more details from the reading and see if you can draw a conclusion. Remember, making an inference is not just making a wild guess. You need to make a judgment that can be supported, just as you could reasonably infer there is a baby in a stroller, but not reasonably infer that there are groceries, even though both would technically be a “guess.”

When you are asked an inference question, go back over the reading and look for hints within the text, such as words that are directly related to the question you may be asked (such as for a multiple choice test) or words that indicate opinion.

Here is an example:

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

Which of the following can you infer from the passage?

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

All four answers are about hybrid cars in some way, but none of the answers can be found directly from the text. Read through and

see what hints you can find from the text.

You will notice right away that there is nothing about car safety in the passage at all, so you can eliminate choice 1.

Choice 2 is implied: if the car cost \$3,500 more than other cars, then Toyota would be making a lot of money by selling the car. But is it the most reasonable conclusion? To be sure, you need to go through all of the answers—don't just stop when you find one that looks okay.

You may think that choice 3 is true. After all, people want to make hybrid cars because they believe that emissions are contributing to environmental damage, but this is not mentioned in the paragraph. Even if you think it is true, the answer has to be supported by the text to be the correct answer to the problem.

Choice 4 could be inferred from the text. If a person had a large family, was short on money, or needed a car that could accelerate quickly, then a hybrid might not be the best choice for them.

Now compare choice d with the other possible answer, choice 2. Now you are thinking choice 2 might not be as good an answer because you don't know how much it costs Toyota to make the cars, and you don't know how many they sell, so you can't reasonably infer that they are making a lot of money!

Choice 4 has to be the correct answer.

Inferences: Reading Between the Lines

Check out this video "Inference" by blumeanie07 that discusses a useful strategy to help you when making inferences while reading.

Contributors

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7: PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION

7.1: Patterns of Organization and Methods of Development

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7.1: Patterns of Organization and Methods of Development

Patterns of organization can help readers follow the ideas within a text, but they can also work as methods of development to help readers recognize ideas and relationships. Here are some strategies that can help you identify organization in texts.

Major Patterns of Organization

Read the following sentences:

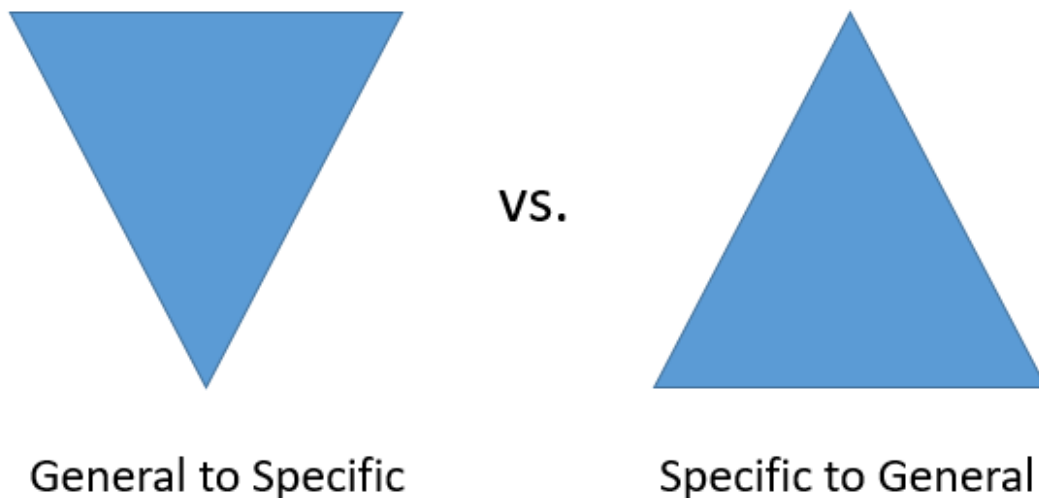
1. Now take the pie out of the oven and let it cool on the stovetop.
2. Mix the dry ingredients with the liquid ingredients.
3. Set the pie crust aside while you make the filling.

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

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

General to Specific or Specific to General

It might be useful to think of a triangle when determining how a reading is organized:



Figure

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

For example, if an author's topic is air pollution in Portland, Oregon, an essay that uses the **general-to-specific organizational**

structure might begin this way:

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

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

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

What's the difference between these two introductions? And how might they appeal to the intended audience for this essay (Portland voters) in different ways? The first introduction is looking at the big picture of the problem and mentions pollution's impact on all citizens in Portland, while the second introduction focuses on one specific family. The first helps readers see how vast the problem really is, and the second helps connect readers to a real family, making an emotional appeal from the very beginning. Neither introduction is necessarily better.

There are Other Ways Authors Organize Their Ideas

Authors may also include some of the following ways of organizing their ideas, along with signal words for those patterns of organization:

- **Cause and effect** (shows different causes and effects of situations)
 - because
 - as a result
 - for this reason
 - consequently
 - therefore
 - in effect
 - hence
- **Chronological order** (the order in time that events take place)
 - first, second, third
 - next
 - last
 - until
 - before, after
 - later
- **Compare and contrast** (differences and similarities; ideas are organized together because of their relationship to each other)
 - **COMPARE:**
 - similar(ly)
 - in the same way
 - likewise
 - parallels
 - **CONTRAST:**
 - different
 - however
 - yet
 - but
 - bigger than, smaller than
- **Definition and example** (terms are defined and further explained with examples)
 - is defined as
 - refers to
 - is described as
 - means

- is called
- **Sequential order** (similar to chronological order; arranges items in step-by-step order within a particular process)
 - first, second, third
 - next
 - last
 - finally
 - later
- **Simple listing** (random listing of items where order does not matter)
 - in addition
 - also
 - another
 - several
 - next
 - a number of
 - for example
 - finally
- **Spatial** (description of the arrangement or location of items within a physical space)
 - next to
 - beside
 - above
 - over, under
 - north, south, east, west

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8: Graphics and Visual Aids



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Oftentimes, authors include charts, graphs, pictures and other visual aids in their writing. Listed below are various types of data found on most graphics, whether a pie chart, bar graph, line chart, or other type. The key to comprehending graphics and using them to get more meaning from a textbook chapter or an article, or to answer study questions, is to pay close attention to the typical elements of the graphic. Not every graphic includes all of the elements listed.

1. Title
2. Captions
3. Legend
4. Axis information (vertical information, or “Y” data, and horizontal information, or “X” data)
5. Publication date (important for the most current information)
6. Publisher (important for credibility)
7. Labels
8. Color (used to differentiate and compare data)
9. Size (also used to represent comparisons)
10. Spatial positions (helps for comparing and contrasting)
11. Patterns represented by the content, itself, and
12. Trends that appear more evident when viewing the visual representation of the data.

Oftentimes, students become overwhelmed or intimidated by the representation of information. There are several key steps to interpreting and understanding graphics and visual aids within a text selection, and this can be accomplished without feeling overwhelmed or intimidated.

Step 1: Read the Title to gain a sense of the subject of the visual.

Step 2: Read the heading or subheading provided to gain more information about the visual.

Step 3: Read the source to determine if the information presented is trustworthy, current, and reliable.

Step 4: Read the categories, legends, or keys to understand how information is labeled or categorized.

Step 5: Identify what the data is specifically saying in the given visual.

Step 6: Identify trends or patterns based on the information presented in the visual.

The video below breaks down elements of tables, charts, and graphs. It shows how visual elements can be adjusted to give different impressions of the same information.

YouTube Video

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9: UNDERSTANDING THE AUTHOR

9.1: Purpose

9.2: Tone

9.3: Bias

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9.1: Purpose

Identifying Common Academic Purposes

The **purpose** for a piece of writing identifies the reason you write it by, basically, answering the question “Why?” For example, why write a play? To entertain a packed theater. Why write instructions to the babysitter? To inform him or her of your schedule and rules. Why write a letter to your congressman? To persuade him to address your community’s needs. Regardless of the purpose, a critical reader will be able to identify it by identifying the way in which the author writes about the topic, the words the author uses, and the examples the author provides. Clues to an author’s purpose may also be found in titles, prefaces, and the author’s background.

There are various reasons for writing:

- to narrate or recount events
- to describe how something looks, feels, sounds, or tastes
- to persuade or convince
- to inform or teach
- to entertain or amuse (the author will use jokes or anecdotes)
- to satirize, or mock (the author will use words that have sarcastic connotations)
- to critique or evaluate (the author will use words to discuss reliability, accuracy, reasons or evidence, or facts and opinions)
- to criticize (the author will use harsh or negatively-charged words)

Exercise 2

Read the following paragraphs about four films and then identify the purpose of each paragraph: to summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, or to evaluate.

1. This film could easily have been cut down to less than two hours. By the final scene, I noticed that most of my fellow moviegoers were snoozing in their seats and were barely paying attention to what was happening on screen. Although the director sticks diligently to the book, he tries too hard to cram in all the action, which is just too ambitious for such a detail-oriented story. If you want my advice, read the book and give the movie a miss.
2. During the opening scene, we learn that the character Laura is adopted and that she has spent the past three years desperately trying to track down her real parents. Having exhausted all the usual options—adoption agencies, online searches, family trees, and so on—she is on the verge of giving up when she meets a stranger on a bus. The chance encounter leads to a complicated chain of events that ultimately result in Laura getting her lifelong wish. But is it really what she wants? Throughout the rest of the film, Laura discovers that sometimes the past is best left where it belongs.
3. To create the feeling of being gripped in a vice, the director, May Lee, uses a variety of elements to gradually increase the tension. The creepy, haunting melody that subtly enhances the earlier scenes becomes ever more insistent, rising to a disturbing crescendo toward the end of the movie. The desperation of the actors, combined with the claustrophobic atmosphere and tight camera angles create a realistic firestorm, from which there is little hope of escape. Walking out of the theater at the end feels like staggering out of a Roman dungeon.
4. The scene in which Campbell and his fellow prisoners assist the guards in shutting down the riot immediately strikes the viewer as unrealistic. Based on the recent reports on prison riots in both Detroit and California, it seems highly unlikely that a posse of hardened criminals will intentionally help their captors at the risk of inciting future revenge from other inmates. Instead, both news reports and psychological studies indicate that prisoners who do not actively participate in a riot will go back to their cells and avoid conflict altogether. Examples of this lack of attention to detail occur throughout the film, making it almost unbearable to watch.

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9.2: Tone

Tone refers to the overall emotional attitude or stance an author has toward his or her subject. We know intuitively what “tone of voice” means when we’re describing a conversation. What emotions did we detect in the sound of the voice? What was the overall attitude of the speaker? These emotions and attitudes come across in many ways and are conveyed by word choice and choice of examples. However, an author’s tone may also be conveyed in many other ways, both subtle and overt, including sentence structure, use of questions, emphasis, and of course, by the attitude the words themselves declare.

An author’s tone in relation to its subject affects the relationship with the reader. If the reader has a similar attitude, they will feel more trust or affinity for the what the author is saying. If their attitude toward the subject is radically different, they may be so alienated that they reject the author’s words.

Characteristic	Tone words
Degree of seriousness	conversational, flippant, glib, childish, frivolous, facetious, humorous, sarcastic, comic, satiric, amused, ironic, mocking, irreverent casual, lighthearted, playful, cheerful, ridiculous, giddy, dreamy
Degree of approval of the subject	elated, enthusiastic, ecstatic, celebratory, euphoric, joyous, jubilant, zestful, exuberant, blissful, happy, delighted, awestruck, appreciative, approving
Degree of aggression	aggressive, caustic, explosive, violent, critical, disapproving, harsh, embattled
Attitude to another's success	envious, jealous
Degree of anger (at another's failing)	critical, annoyed, angry, frustrated, impatient, disappointed, resentful, hurt, aggravated, outraged, appalled, indignant, disgusted, impotent, vindictive, vengeful, furious
Attitude to one's own failing	defensive, self-indulgent
Positive or negative intentions toward others	benevolent, kind, loving, affectionate, amiable, genial, agreeable, friendly, jovial, encouraging
Degree of emotional connection	concerned, compassionate, tender, consoling, comforting, sympathetic, empathetic

Degree of calm	calm, tranquil, serene, unworried, contemplative, meditative, reflective, thoughtful
Degree of hesitation	cautious, hesitating, reticent, evasive
Degree of certainty	conflicted, uncertain, reluctant, contradictory, confused, ambivalent, uneasy, apologetic, regretful, pensive
Degree of respect for others	dismissive, patronizing, condescending, arrogant, haughty, chauvinistic, macho, domineering
Degree of self-regard	condescending, arrogant, patronizing, proud, majestic, haughty, obnoxious
Attitude to the future / positive or negative affect	despairing, tragic, defeated, discouraged, resigned, overwhelmed, disheartened, dismal, foreboding, dejected, depressed, bitter, bleak, bewildered, pessimistic, distressed, cynical, pathetic, melancholy, nostalgic, saddened, miserable, morbid, morose, mournful, sorrowful, somber, lamenting, grave, grim
Degree of interest in the topic	wondering, curious, inquisitive, fascinated
Degree of distance	formal, impersonal, objective, neutral, journalistic, informative, professional, businesslike, intellectual, detached, numb, distant, disinterested
Degree of formality	formal, businesslike, professional, professorial, esoteric
Degree of surprise	unbelieving, incredulous, skeptical, surprised, innocent, naive, disbelieving
Pace and attention to detail	abrupt, hurried, hasty

Warmth of feeling toward the subject	warm, flirtatious, seductive
Degree orientation toward action	active, determined, forceful
Desire to communicate	talkative, eager
Attitude to powerful forces like spirit, country, religion	patriotic, pious, religious, reverent, mystical, spiritual, obedient
Openness	open, direct

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9.3: Bias



Figure 9.3.1

Bias

Bias means presenting facts and arguments in a way that consciously favors one side or other in an argument. Is bias bad or wrong?

No! Everyone who argues strongly for something is biased. So it's not enough, when you are doing a language analysis, to merely spot some bias and say..."This writer is biased" or "This speaker is biased."

Let's begin by reading a biased text.

Hypocrites gather to feed off Daniel's tragic death

The death of two-year-old Daniel Valerio at the hands of his step-father brought outrage from the media.

Daniel suffered repeated beatings before the final attack by Paul Alton, who was sentenced in Melbourne in February to 22 years jail.

Rupert Murdoch's Herald-Sun launched a campaign which included a public meeting of hundreds of readers. Time magazine put Daniel on its front cover. The Herald-Sun summed up their message:

The community has a duty to protect our children from abuse – if necessary by laws that some people regard as possibly harsh or unnecessary.

But laws – like making it compulsory for doctors and others to report suspected abuse – cannot stop the violence.

Last year, 30 children were murdered across Australia. Babies under one are more likely to be killed than any other social group.

Daniel's murder was not a horrific exception but the product of a society that sends some of its members over the edge into despairing violence.

The origin of these tragedies lies in the enormous pressures on families, especially working class families.

The media and politicians wring their hands over a million unemployed. But they ignore the impact that having no job, or a stressful poorly paid job, can have.

Child abuse can happen in wealthy families. But generally it is linked to poverty.

A survey in 1980 of “maltreating families” showed that 56.5 per cent were living in poverty and debt. A further 20 per cent expressed extreme anxiety about finances.

A study in Queensland found that all the children who died from abuse came from working class families.

Police records show that school holidays – especially Xmas – are peak times for family violence. “The sad fact is that when families are together for longer than usual, there tends to be more violence”, said one Victorian police officer.

Most people get by. Family life may get tense, but not violent.

But a minority cannot cope and lash out at the nearest vulnerable person to hand – an elderly person, a woman, or a child.

Compulsory reporting of child abuse puts the blame on the individual parents rather than the system that drives them to this kind of despair.

Neither is it a solution. Daniel was seen by 21 professionals before he was killed. Nonetheless, the Victorian Liberal government has agreed to bring it in.

Their hypocrisy is breathtaking.

This is the same government that is sacking 250 fire-fighters, a move that will lead to more deaths.

A real challenge to the basis of domestic violence means a challenge to poverty.

Yet which side were the media on when Labor cut the under-18 dole, or when Jeff Kennett[1] added \$30 a week to the cost of sending a child to kindergarten?

To really minimise family violence, we need a fight for every job and against every cutback.

– by David Glanz, *The Socialist*, April 1993

There are good and bad aspects of bias.

It is good to be open about one's bias. For example, the article about Daniel Valerio's tragic death is written for *The Socialist* newspaper. Clearly those who identify as socialists will have a bias against arguments that blame only the individual for a crime when it could be argued that many other factors in society contributed to the crime and need to be changed. Focusing on the individual, from the socialist's point of view, gets “the system” off the hook when crimes happen. The socialist's main reason for writing is to criticize the capitalist system. So David Glanz is not pretending to not be biased, because he has published his article in a partisan[2] newspaper.

- Below are some items to look for when determining bias in a text. An author:
 - deliberately avoids mentioning any of the opposing arguments.
 - deliberately avoids mentioning relevant facts or information that would undermine their own case.
 - gets into hyperbole.
 - makes too much use of emotive language.
 - misuses or distorts statistics.
 - uses negative adjectives when talking about people they disagree with, but uses positive adjectives when talking about people they agree with.

Go back through Glaz's article and see if you can find examples of any of these biases.

You mustn't assume that because a person writes with a particular bias he/she is not being sincere, or that he/she has not really thought the issue through. The person is not just stating what he/she thinks, he/she is trying to persuade you about something.

Bias can result from the way someone has organized their experiences in their own mind. Perhaps they have lumped some experiences into the 'good' box and some experiences into the 'bad' box. Just about everybody does this[3]. The way an author has assembled and valued experiences in their mind is called their *Weltanschauung* (Velt-arn-shao-oong). If through their own experience, plus good thinking about those experiences, they have a better understanding of something, their bias is indeed a good thing.

For example, if you have been a traffic policeman, and have seen numerous disasters due to speed and alcohol, it is not 'wrong' for you to be biased against fast cars and drinking at parties, restaurants, and other social events. Your bias is due to your better understanding of the issue, *but you still have to argue logically*.

If an author pretends to be objective, to not take sides, but actually uses techniques that tend to support one side of an argument, in that case they are being deceitful. There are subtle ways an author might do this:

- If the support for one side of the argument is mainly at the top of the article, and the reasons to support the opposite side of the issue are mainly at the bottom end of the article; that might be subtle bias – especially if it was written by a journalist. Journalists are taught that many readers only read the first few paragraphs of an article before moving on to reading another article, so whatever is in the first few paragraphs will be what sticks in the reader's mind.
- Quotes from real people are stronger emotionally than just statements by the writer. This is especially true if the person being quoted is an 'authority' on the subject, or a 'celebrity'. So if one side of the issue is being supported by many quotes, and the other side isn't, that is a subtle form of bias.
- If when one person is quoted as saying X, but the very next sentence makes that quote sound silly or irrational, that is a subtle form of bias too.

Common sense tells us that if someone is making money out of something, he/she will be biased in favor of it.

For example, a person who makes money out of building nuclear reactors in Europe or China could be expected to support a change in policy in Australia towards developing nuclear energy.

A manufacturer of cigarettes is unlikely to be in favor of health warnings on cigarette packets or bans on smoking in restaurants.



Figure 9.3.2

Nonetheless, logically speaking, **we cannot just assume** a person who is making money out of something will always take sides with whomever or whatever will make him/her more money.

We have to listen to the arguments as they arise. **Assuming** someone is biased is not logically okay. You have to **show** that someone is biased and use **evidence** to support your assertion that he/she is biased.

References

[1] Jeff Kennett was the leader of the Liberal party in Victoria at that time.

[2] When you are a **partisan** you have **taken sides** in an argument, or a battle, or a war.

[3] Learning critical thinking (which is what you are learning in Year 11 and 12 English) is aimed at getting you to do more, and better, thinking than that.

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10: EFFECTIVE RESEARCH

10.1: Why is Information Literacy Important?

10.2: Finding Sources

10.3: Finding Quality Texts

10.4: Source Analysis

10.5: Critiquing a Text

10.6: Learning About Plagiarism and Guidelines for Using Information

10.7: Crediting and Citing Your Sources

10.8: Using Modern Language Association (MLA) Style

10.1: Why is Information Literacy Important?



Figure

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Check Your Understanding: *Snopes*

[Edit section](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Plagiarism occurs when we use someone else's “intellectual property” without giving them credit. **Intellectual property** is defined as material or ideas envisioned and created by another person. There are many kinds of intellectual property, including books, articles, essays, stories, poems, films, photographs, works of art or craft, or even just ideas. If someone else thought of an idea and brought it into the world, they own it, and if you use their idea in your work, you have to acknowledge them as the actual owner. If you don't? You've committed plagiarism.

Check Your Understanding: Plagiarism

[Edit section](#)

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

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

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10.2: Finding Sources

SKILLS TO DEVELOP

- Identify preliminary research strategies (developing a research plan, basic online searching, using Google)
- Identify intermediate research strategies (advanced online searches, finding scholarly sources and primary and secondary sources, librarian consultation)
- Identify advanced search strategies (advanced library searches, library databases, keyword and field searches)

Introduction

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Figure 4.2.14.2.1

There are numerous reasons to include research in an academic essay or project.

- Reading what others have written about a topic clearly helps you become better-informed about it.
- Sharing what you've learned about the topic in your essay or project demonstrates your knowledge.
- Quoting or paraphrasing experts in the field establishes your own credibility as an author on the topic.
- Responding to what's already been said on a topic, by including your unique perspective, allows your essay or project to enter the broader conversation, and shape how others feel about the issue.

And, the biggest motivation of all: it's a requirement for an assignment (because your instructor wants you to do all of those things above).

The writing process is a series of flexible steps that help you break a large project into smaller, bite-size pieces. Research is also a process. It's not something that can be accomplished well in one single step, but rather done in stages, with time for reflection and analysis in between.

The first part of that process is simply knowing where to look, and that's what we'll explore in the following pages.

Preliminary Research Strategies

[Edit section](#)

THE RESEARCH PROCESS



Figure 4.2.24.2.2

The first step towards writing a research paper is pretty obvious: find sources. Not everything that you find will be useful, and those that are useful are not always easily found. Having an idea of what you're looking for—what will most help you develop your essay and enforce your thesis—will help guide your process.

Example of a Research Process

[Edit section](#)

An effective research process should go through these steps:

1. Decide on the topic.
2. Narrow the topic in order to narrow search parameters.
3. Create a question that your research will address.
4. Generate sub-questions from your main question.
5. Determine what kind of sources are best for your argument.
6. Create a bibliography as you gather and reference sources.

Each of these is described in greater detail below.

Pre-Research

[Edit section](#)



Figure 4.2.34.2.3 - Books, books, books ...Do not start research haphazardly—come up with a plan first.

A research plan should begin after you can clearly identify the focus of your argument. First, inform yourself about the basics of your topic (Wikipedia and general online searches are great starting points). Be sure you've read all the assigned texts and carefully read the prompt as you gather preliminary information. This stage is sometimes called **pre-research**.

A broad online search will yield thousands of sources, which no one could be expected to read through. To make it easier on yourself, the next step is to narrow your focus. Think about what kind of position or stance you can take on the topic. What about it strikes you as most interesting? Refer back to the prewriting stage of the writing process, which will come in handy here.

PRELIMINARY SEARCH TIPS

[Edit section](#)

1. It is okay to start with [Wikipedia](#) as a reference, but do not use it as an official source. Look at the links and references at the bottom of the page for more ideas.
2. Use “Ctrl+F” to find certain words within a webpage in order to jump to the sections of the article that interest you.
3. Use [Google Advanced Search](#) to be more specific in your search. You can also use tricks to be more specific within the main [Google Search Engine](#):
 1. Use quotation marks to narrow your search from just tanks in WWII to “Tanks in WWII” or “Tanks” in “WWII”.
 2. Find specific types of websites by adding “site:.gov” or “site:.edu” or “site:.org”. You can also search for specific file types like “filetype:.pdf”.
4. Click on “Search Tools” under the search bar in Google and select “Any time” to see a list of options for time periods to help limit your search. You can find information just in the past month or year, or even for a custom range.

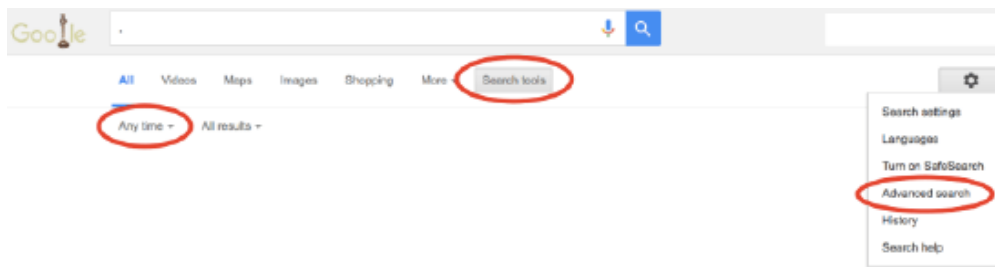


Figure 4.2.44.2.4 - Use features already available through Google Search like Search Tools and Advanced Search to narrow and refine your results.

As you narrow your focus, create a list of questions that you’ll need to answer in order to write a good essay on the topic. The research process will help you answer these questions.

Another part of your research plan should include the type of sources you want to gather. Keep track of these sources in a bibliography and jot down notes about the book, article, or document and how it will be useful to your essay. This will save you a lot of time later in the essay process—you’ll thank yourself!

Level Up Your Google Game

[Edit section](#)

10 GOOGLE QUICK TIPS

[Edit section](#)

We all know how to Google...but we may not be getting as much out of it as we’d like. The following video walks through ten easy tips for getting you closer to what you’re looking for.

Getting More Out of Google

[Edit section](#)

For a visual representation of additional online search tips, click the image below.

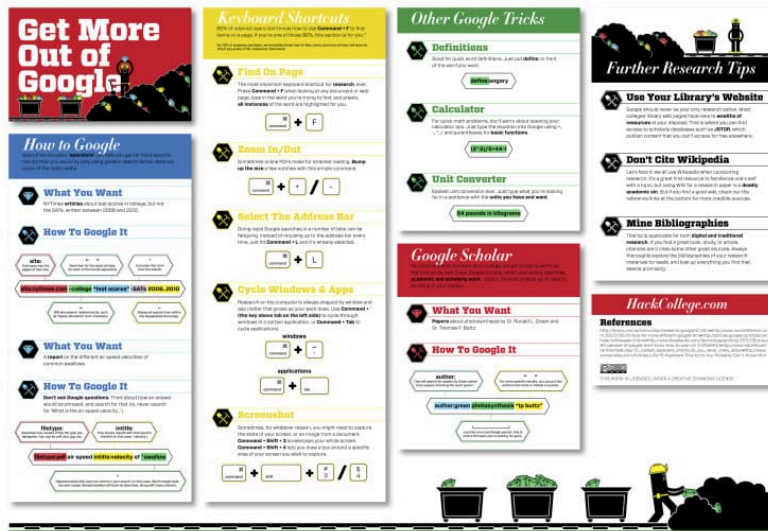


Figure 4.2.54.2.5 - Click on this Infographic to open it and learn tricks for getting more out of Google.

Intermediate Search Strategies

[Edit section](#)

“Popular” vs. “Scholarly” Sources

[Edit section](#)

Research-based writing assignments in college will often require that you use **scholarly sources** in the essay. Different from the types of articles found in newspapers or general-interest magazines, scholarly sources have a few distinguishing characteristics.

	Popular Source	Scholarly Source
Intended Audience	Broad: readers are not expected to know much about the topic already	Narrow: readers are expected to be familiar with the topic before-hand
Author	Journalist: may have a broad area of specialization (war correspondent, media critic)	Subject Matter Expert: often has a degree in the subject and/or extensive experience on the topic
Research	Includes quotes from interviews. No bibliography.	Includes summaries, paraphrases, and quotations from previous writing done on the subject. Footnotes and citations. Ends with bibliography.
Publication Standards	Article is reviewed by editor and proofreader	Article has gone through a peer-review process, where experts on the field have given input before publication

Where to Find Scholarly Sources

[Edit section](#)



Figure 4.2.64.2.6

The first step in finding scholarly resources is to look in the right place. Sites like Google, Yahoo, and Wikipedia may be good for popular sources, but if you want something you can cite in a scholarly paper, you need to find it from a scholarly database.

Two common scholarly databases are Academic Search Premier and ProQuest, though many others are also available that focus on specific topics. Your school library pays to subscribe to these databases, to make them available for you to use as a student.

You have another incredible resource at your fingertips: your college's librarians! For help locating resources, you will find that librarians are extremely knowledgeable and may help you uncover sources you would never have found on your own—maybe your school has a microfilm collection, an extensive genealogy database, or access to another library's catalog. You will not know unless you utilize the valuable skills available to you, so be sure to find out how to get in touch with a research librarian for support!

Primary and Secondary Sources

[Edit section](#)

A primary source is an original document. Primary sources can come in many different forms. In an English paper, a primary source might be the poem, play, or novel you are studying. In a history paper, it may be a historical document such as a letter, a journal, a map, the transcription of a news broadcast, or the original results of a study conducted during the time period under review. If you conduct your own field research, such as surveys, interviews, or experiments, your results would also be considered a primary source. Primary sources are valuable because they provide the researcher with the information closest to the time period or topic at hand. They also allow the writer to conduct an original analysis of the source and to draw new conclusions.

Secondary sources, by contrast, are books and articles that analyze primary sources. They are valuable because they provide other scholars' perspectives on primary sources. You can also analyze them to see if you agree with their conclusions or not.

Most college essays will use a combination of primary and secondary sources.

Google Scholar

[Edit section](#)

An increasingly popular article database is **Google Scholar**. It looks like a regular Google search, and it aims to include the vast majority of scholarly resources available. While it has some limitations (like not including a list of which journals they include), it's a very useful tool if you want to cast a wide net.

Here are three tips for using Google Scholar effectively:

1. **Add your topic field (economics, psychology, French, etc.) as one of your keywords.** If you just put in “crime,” for example, Google Scholar will return all sorts of stuff from sociology, psychology, geography, and history. If your paper is on crime in French literature, your best sources may be buried under thousands of papers from other disciplines. A set of search terms like “crime French literature modern” will get you to relevant sources much faster.
2. **Don’t ever pay for an article.** When you click on links to articles in Google Scholar, you may end up on a publisher’s site that tells you that you can download the article for \$20 or \$30. Don’t do it! You probably have access to virtually all the published academic literature through your library resources. Write down the key information (authors’ names, title, journal title, volume, issue number, year, page numbers) and go find the article through your library website. If you don’t have immediate full-text access, you may be able to get it through inter-library loan.
3. **Use the “cited by” feature.** If you get one great hit on Google Scholar, you can quickly see a list of other papers that cited it. For example, the search terms “crime economics” yielded this hit for a 1988 paper that appeared in a journal called *Kyklos*:

The economics of crime deterrence: a survey of theory and evidence

S Cameron - *Kyklos*, 1988 - Wiley Online Library

Since BECKER [1968] economists have generated a large literature on **crime**. Deterrence effects have figured prominently; few papers [eg HOCH, 1974] omit consideration of these. There are two reasons why a survey of the **economics** of deterrence is timely. Firstly, there ...

[Cited by 392](#) [Related articles](#) [All 5 versions](#) [Cite](#) [Save](#)

Figure 4.2.74.2.7 - Google Scholar search results.

USING GOOGLE SCHOLAR

[Edit section](#)

Watch this video to get a better idea of how to utilize Google Scholar for finding articles. While this video shows specifics for setting up an account with Eastern Michigan University, the same principles apply to other colleges and universities. Ask your librarian if you have more questions.

Advanced Search Strategies

[Edit section](#)

As we learned earlier, the strongest articles to support your academic writing projects will come from scholarly sources. Finding exactly what you need becomes specialized at this point, and requires a new set of searching strategies beyond even Google Scholar.

For this kind of research, you’ll want to utilize library databases, as this video explains.

Many journals are sponsored by academic associations. Most of your professors belong to some big, general one (such as the **Modern Language Association**, the **American Psychological Association**, or the **American Physical Society**) and one or more smaller ones organized around particular areas of interest and expertise (such as the [Association for the Study of Food and Society](#) and the [International Association for Statistical Computing](#)).

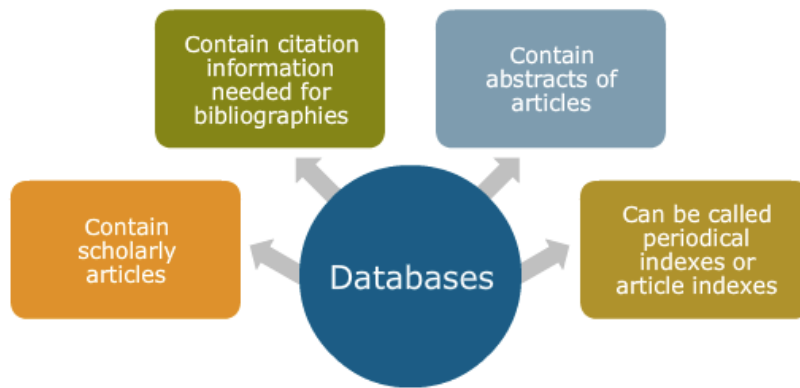


Figure 4.2.84.2.8

Finding articles in databases

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Your campus library invests a lot of time and care into making sure you have access to the sources you need for your writing projects. Many libraries have online research guides that point you to the best databases for the specific discipline and, perhaps, the specific course. Librarians are eager to help you succeed with your research—it’s their job and they love it!—so don’t be shy about asking.

The following video demonstrates how to search within a library database. While the examples are specific to Northern Virginia Community College, the same general search tips apply to nearly all academic databases. On your school’s library homepage, you should be able to find a general search button and an alphabetized list of databases. Get familiar with your own school’s library homepage to identify the general search features, find databases, and practice searching for specific articles.

How to Search in a Database

[Edit section](#)

Scholarly databases like the ones your library subscribes to work differently than search engines like Google and Yahoo because they offer sophisticated tools and techniques for searching that can improve your results.

Databases may look different but they can all be used in similar ways. Most databases can be searched using **keywords** or **fields**. In a keyword search, you want to search for the main concepts or synonyms of your keywords. A field is a specific part of a record in a database. Common fields that can be searched are author, title, subject, or abstract. If you already know the author of a specific article, entering their “Last Name, First Name” in the author field will pull more relevant records than a keyword search. This will ensure all results are articles written by the author and not articles about that author or with that author’s name. For example, a keyword search for “Albert Einstein” will search anywhere in the record for Albert Einstein and reveal 12, 719 results. Instead, a field search for Author: “Einstein, Albert” will show 54 results, all written by Albert Einstein.

EXAMPLE 4.2.14.2.1:

This short video demonstrates how to perform a title search within the popular EBSCO database, *Academic Search Complete*.

EXERCISE 4.2.14.2.1

1. Identify the keywords in the following research question: “How does repeated pesticide use in agriculture impact soil and groundwater pollution?”
2. When you search, it’s helpful to think of synonyms for your keywords to examine various results. What synonyms can you think of for the keywords identified in the question above?

Answer

Sometimes you already have a citation (maybe you found it on Google Scholar or saw it linked through another source), but want to find the article. Everything you need to locate your article is already found in the citation.



Figure 4.2.94.2.9 - CC-BY-NC-SA image from UCI Libraries Begin Research Online Workshop Tutorial.

Many databases, including the library catalog, offer tools to help you narrow or expand your search. Take advantage of these. The most common tools are Boolean searching and truncation.

Boolean Searching

[Edit section](#)

Boolean searching allows you to use AND, OR, and NOT to combine your search terms. Here are some examples:

1. **“Endangered Species” AND “Global Warming”** When you combine search terms with AND, you’ll get results in which BOTH terms are present. Using AND limits the number of results because all search terms must appear in your results.

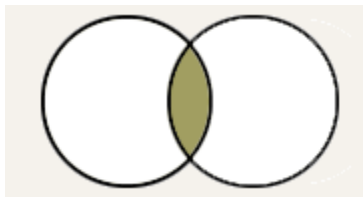


Figure 4.2.104.2.10 - “Endangered Species” AND “Global Warming” will narrow your search results to where the two concepts overlap.

2. **“Arizona Prisons” OR “Rhode Island Prisons”** When you use OR, you’ll get results with EITHER search term. Using OR increases the number of results because either search term can appear in your results.

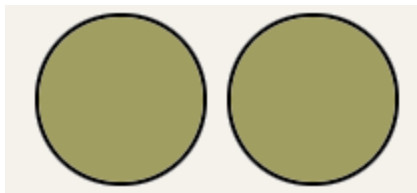


Figure 4.2.114.2.11 - “Arizona Prisons” OR “Rhode Island Prisons” will increase your search results.

3. **“Miami Dolphins” NOT “Football”** When you use NOT, you’ll get results that exclude a search term. Using NOT limits the

number of results.



Figure 4.2.124.2.12 - “Miami Dolphins” NOT “Football” removes the white circle (football) from the green search results (Miami Dolphins).

Truncation

[Edit section](#)

Truncation allows you to search different forms of the same word at the same time. Use the root of a word and add an asterisk (*) as a substitute for the word’s ending. It can save time and increase your search to include related words. For example, a search for “Psycho*” would pull results on psychology, psychological, psychologist, psychosis, and psychoanalyst.

Self-Check

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10.3: Finding Quality Texts

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

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

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

[Edit section](#)

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

C: Currency

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

R: Reliability

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

A: Authority

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

P: Purpose and Point of View

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

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

- Gives you access to a world of source materials that have already been reviewed and approved by the librarian staff.
- Allows you free database access that would be extremely expensive if purchased as a non-student. (For example, accessing an EBSCO online database—one of the best college research standards—online can cost \$40-50 per article! Fortunately, the same article would be free through your college library.)
- Provides current, constantly updated sources.
- Allows you to obtain materials that your library may not have. How? Through a wonderful service called interlibrary loan, where your library will actually contact other libraries—all over the country!—to find the materials you need and get them to you.
- Provides study spaces, tutoring, research assistance, and other helps.
- Gives you access to librarians—the library's greatest resource. Where a library database can give you thousands of results in response to a search, the librarian can help you figure out where to start looking, or what search terms to use. They can answer any and all of your questions relating to research.

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

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

[Edit section](#)

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

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

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

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

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

Domain name endings

[Edit section](#)

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

Example of a Web address: www.cnn.com

Example of a domain name ending: .com

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

.com: a commercial or personal site. These are generally considered to be some of the least reliable sources because anyone can create one and they're typically used for either private blogs, web pages, and other personal uses or for commercial purposes and sales. (CRAP+/-, i.e., "CRAP positive or negative")

.org: these used to belong solely to non-profit sites, such as The American Cancer Society. But these days, anyone can purchase and use a .org site for any purpose. Thus the content on a .org site may vary widely in terms of its authority. (CRAP+/-)

.edu: educational sites, usually maintained by colleges and universities but sometimes by high schools as well. These sites are considered to be very reliable. (CRAP+)

.gov and .mil: government and military sites, maintained by the governments and the military. These sites are considered to be very reliable. (CRAP+)

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

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

C: Is it current? Yes, it is. He is continually adding new materials and updating the site.

R: Is it reliable? Yes. Pollan uses sources and/or provides source lists for his writings. His work is objective and fact-based.

A: Is it authoritative? Yes. Pollan provides an extensive biography and a list of his publications and honors. His work is widely respected throughout the publishing and journalism communities, and his books have been published by some of our best-known publishing companies.

P: What is its purpose? Pollan is a journalist who tries to share science-based information about food and the food industry. He seeks to inform, and he does this with the intention of wanting to make people's lives better. He is addressing a vast audience: the American people.

Result? CRAP+

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

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

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

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

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

Result? CRAP-

Authors

[Edit section](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Information/Page Date

[Edit section](#)

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

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

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

Other Points to Check

[Edit section](#)

Consider the visual layout and appeal of the page:

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

And take a look at the page content:

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

Look in the Right Places

[Edit section](#)

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

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

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

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

TIP

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

Check Your Understanding: Evaluating a Website

[Edit section](#)

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

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

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

Part 2: Answer and consider the following.

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

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

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

[Edit section](#)

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

A Few Thoughts on *Wikipedia* and other Open Encyclopedias

[Edit section](#)

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

Why not?

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

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

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

One, as discussed above, Wiki entries can be made and edited by anyone. (CRAP-)

Two, there are multiple instances of *Wikipedia* entries being changed as a “joke” or to defame or damage a source’s credibility. (CRAP-)

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

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

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

In addition to not using *Wikipedia* as an academic source, you should also avoid *DotDash* (formerly *About.com*), *Yahoo!*

Answers, eHow, and other similar public information sites. If you have questions about using these sources, discuss this with your teacher.

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10.4: Source Analysis

Good researchers and writers examine their sources critically and actively. They do not just compile and summarize these research sources in their writing, but use them to create their own ideas, theories, and, ultimately, their own, new understanding of the topic they are researching. Such an approach means not taking the information and opinions that the sources contain at face value and for granted, but to investigate, test, and even doubt every claim, every example, every story, and every conclusion.



Figure 4.3.14.3.1

In this section you'll expand on utilizing the C.R.A.A.P test from the previous section to verify that your source is useful and relevant.

Evaluating Sources

[Edit section](#)



Figure 4.3.24.3.2

You will need to evaluate each source you consider using by asking two questions:

- Is this source trustworthy?
- Is this source suitable?

Not every suitable source is trustworthy, and not every trustworthy source is suitable.

Determining Suitability

[Edit section](#)

Your task as a researcher is to determine the appropriateness of the information your source contains, for your particular research project. It is a simple question, really: will this source help me answer the research questions that I am posing in my project? Will it help me learn as much as I can about my topic? Will it help me write an interesting, convincing essay for my readers?

Determining Trustworthiness

[Edit section](#)

Click through the slideshow to read about techniques for analyzing sources and differentiating between popular and scholarly sources.

Tools for Evaluating Sources

[Edit section](#)

Need a good way to evaluate a source? Take a look at its “craap”!

The C.R.A.A.P. method is a way to determine the validity and relevance of a source. C.R.A.A.P. stands for:

- **C:** Currency. When was the information published?
- **R:** Relevance. How relevant to your goals is the information?
- **A:** Authority. How well does the author of the information know the information?
- **A:** Accuracy. How reliable is the information?
- **P:** Purpose. Why does this information exist in this way?

If the source you’re looking at is fairly current, relevant, and accurate, it’s probably a good source to use. Depending on the aim of your paper, you’ll be looking for an authority and purpose that are unbiased and informative.

****Refer to the previous section for further explanations for each C.R.A.A.P. element.**

Using Sources in Your Paper

[Edit section](#)

Within the pages of your research essay, it is important to properly reference and cite your sources to avoid plagiarism and to give credit for original ideas.

There are three main ways to put a source to use in your essay: you can quote it, you can summarize it, and you can paraphrase it.

Quoting

[Edit section](#)



Figure 4.3.34.3.3

Direct quotations are words and phrases that are taken directly from another source, and then used word-for-word in your paper. If you incorporate a direct quotation from another author's text, you must put that quotation or phrase in quotation marks to indicate that it is not your language.

When writing direct quotations, you can use the source author's name in the same sentence as the quotation to introduce the quoted text and to indicate the source in which you found the text. You should then include the page number or other relevant information in parentheses at the end of the phrase (the exact format will depend on the formatting style of your essay).

Summarizing

[Edit section](#)

Summarizing involves condensing the main idea of a source into a much shorter overview. A summary outlines a source's most important points and general position. When summarizing a source, it is still necessary to use a citation to give credit to the original author. You must reference the author or source in the appropriate citation method at the end of the summary.

****Refer to Chapter 4 for further explanations about summarizing.**

Paraphrasing

[Edit section](#)

When paraphrasing, you may put any part of a source (such as a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or chapter) into your own words. You may find that the original source uses language that is more clear, concise, or specific than your own language, in which case you should use a direct quotation, putting quotation marks around those unique words or phrases you don't change.

It is common to use a mixture of paraphrased text and quoted words or phrases, as long as the direct quotations are inside of quotation marks.

****Refer to Chapter 4 for further explanations about paraphrasing.**



Figure 4.3.44.3.4 - Sources that are not properly integrated into your paper are like “bricks without mortar: you have the essential substance, but there’s nothing to hold it together, rendering the whole thing formless” (Smith).

Providing Context for Your Sources

[Edit section](#)

Whether you use a direct quotation, a summary, or a paraphrase, it is important to distinguish the original source from your ideas, and to explain how the cited source fits into your argument. While the use of quotation marks or parenthetical citations tells your reader that these are not your own words or ideas, you should follow the quote with a description, in your own terms, of what the

quote says and why it is relevant to the purpose of your paper. You should not let quoted or paraphrased text stand alone in your paper, but rather, should integrate the sources into your argument by providing context and explanations about how each source supports your argument.^[1]

Using Multiple Sources

[Edit section](#)

Sources are a great help for understanding a topic more deeply. But what about when sources don't quite agree with one another, or challenge what you have experienced yourself?

This is where your skill of **synthesis** comes into play, as a writer. Synthesizing includes comparison and contrast, but also allows you to combine multiple perspectives on a topic to reach a deeper understanding.

This video explains the process of synthesis in action.

Self-Check

[Edit section](#)

References

[Edit section](#)

1. [Smith, Matt. "Putting It All Together: Thesis Synthesis." Web log post. Walden University Writing Center, 12 Apr. 2013. Web. 04 Apr. 2016. ↵](#)

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10.5: Critiquing a Text

Let's review:

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

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

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

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

Here are some ideas to consider when critiquing a text:

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

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

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

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10.6: Learning About Plagiarism and Guidelines for Using Information

Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It

[Edit section](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Guidelines for Using Information

[Edit section](#)

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

Copyright

[Edit section](#)



Figure 4.3.14.3.1

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

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

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

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

Fair Use for Academic Purposes

[Edit section](#)



Figure 4.3.24.3.2

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

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

- You will use them for a limited purpose. For example, you'll use them to complete an assignment and then will return or

release them. Specifically, you won't retain the material to use at a later date.

- You will not post them on the Web, make them available publicly, or share them with anyone else.
- You will not make permanent copies of the material.
- You will only use a small portion of the “whole” material. For example, using two or three chapters of a twenty-chapter book is a fine example of fair use; using twenty-four of twenty-five chapters without paying for them would *not* be considered fair use.
- You will not benefit, monetarily, in any way from the material.

Creative Commons

[Edit section](#)

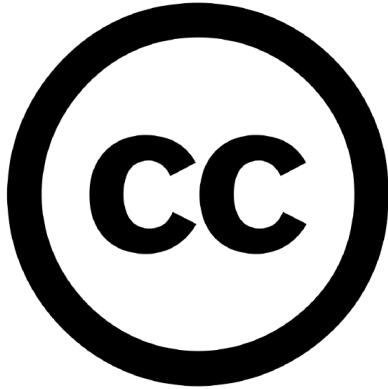


Figure 4.3.34.3.3

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

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

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

Open Educational Resources

[Edit section](#)

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

Wiki Sources

[Edit section](#)

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

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

Torrent and BitTorrent Sites

[Edit section](#)

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

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

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

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

Reverse Image Search

[Edit section](#)

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Reverse Image Search

[Edit section](#)

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

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

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10.7: Crediting and Citing Your Sources



Figure 9.1.19.1.1 - “Old library of Trinity College, Dublin” by Francesc González is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Now that you’ve just summarized or paraphrased or directly quoted a source, is there anything else you need to do with that source? Well, it turns out there is. There are some standard ways of using sources that let your readers know this material is from other texts rather than original ideas from your own brain. Following these guidelines also allows us, your readers, to locate those sources if we are interested in the topic and would like to know more about what they say.

Giving credit to the sources you used creating a text is important (and useful!) for several reasons.

- It adds to your own credibility as an author by showing you have done appropriate research on your topic and approached your work ethically.
- It gives credit to the original author and their work for the ideas you found to be useful, and in giving them credit it helps you avoid unintentionally plagiarizing their work.
- It gives your readers additional resources (already curated by you in your research process!) that they can go to if they want to read further your topic.

What Does It Mean to Credit or Cite Your Sources?

[Edit section](#)

For college-level work, this generally means two things: in-text or parenthetical citation and a “Works Cited” or “References” page. What these two things look like will be a little different for different types of classes (for example, it’s likely your writing class will use MLA—Modern Language Association—format, while a psychology class is more likely to use APA—American Psychological Association—format). The specific details required and the order in which they appear changes a little between different formats, but practicing one of them will give you a general idea of what most of them are looking for. All of the information we are looking at here is specific to MLA, which is the format you will use for your writing classes (and some other humanities classes).

Citing: Identifying In-Text Sources

[Edit section](#)

Once you have brought source material into your writing (via quotation, summary, or paraphrase), your next task is to cite or identify it. This is essential because giving credit to the creator of the source material helps you avoid plagiarism. Identifying your sources also helps your reader understand which written content is from a source and which represents your ideas.

When you cite or identify source materials, you make it absolutely clear that the material was taken from a source. Note that if you don’t do that, your reader is left to assume the words are yours—and since that isn’t true, you will have committed plagiarism.

In-Text Citation

[Edit section](#)

Every time you use an idea or language from a source in your text (so every time you summarize, paraphrase, or directly quote material from a source), you will want to add an in-text citation. Sometimes you can accomplish this simply by mentioning the author or title of a source in the body of your writing, but other times you'll handle in-text citation differently, with a parenthetical citation. Parenthetical means that the citation appears in parentheses in the text of your essay.

A starting point for parenthetical citations is that they include the author's last name and the page number where the borrowed information came from. For example, let's say I'm using material from an article written by Lisa Smith. It's in a physical magazine and spans pages 38-42. If, on page 41, she says something like, "While most studies have shown that Expo dry erase markers have superior lasting power, erasability, and color saturation than other brands on the market, their higher cost is a concern for some consumers," I might incorporate that into a paper like this:

By most measurable standards, Expo markers are clearly the favored option (Smith 41).

However, you don't always need both components (last name and page number) in the parenthetical citation. If I introduced the source material in the sentence above a little differently, introducing the author before delivering the material, I wouldn't need to repeat the author's name in that same sentence in the parenthetical citation. In that case, my sentence would look something like this: According to Lisa Smith, Expo markers are clearly the favored option by most measurable standards (41).

In this section, we'll discuss **three ways to cite or identify written source materials** in your own writing.

1. Introduce the Author and/or the Title of the Source

[Edit section](#)

By introducing the author or the material, you make it clear to the reader that what you're talking about is from a source. Here's an example of a quotation that is identified by introducing the author and the title of source (which are highlighted):

EXAMPLE 1:

In the article, "Grooming Poodles for Fun and Profit," Jonas Fogbottom explains, "Poodle grooming is a labor of love. It takes years of practice to be good at it, but once learned, it's a fun and worthwhile career."

Here's an example of a paraphrase that is identified in the same way:

EXAMPLE 2:

In the article, "Grooming Poodles for Fun and Profit," Jonas Fogbottom says that although it takes a long time to become a skilled poodle groomer, it's well worth the effort and leads to a good career.

Note that, in the example above, (1) if there are no page numbers to cite and (2) if the name of the author is signaled in the phrase that introduces the bit of source material, then there is no need for the parenthetical citation. This is an example of a situation where mentioning the author by name is the only in-text citation you'll need. And sometimes, if the name of the author is unknown, then you might just mention the title of the article instead. It will be up to you, as a writer, to choose which method works best for your given situation.

The first time that you mention a source in your writing, you should always introduce the speaker and, if possible, the title of the source as well. Note that the speaker is the person responsible for stating the information that you're citing and that this is not always the author of the text. For example, an author of an article might quote someone else, and you might quote or paraphrase that person.

Use the speaker's full name (e.g. "According to Jonas Fogbottom . . .") the first time you introduce them; if you mention them again in the paper, use their last name only (e.g. "Fogbottom goes on to discuss . . .").

2. Use Linking or Attributive Language

[Edit section](#)

Using linking language (sometimes called attributive language or signal phrases) simply means using words that show the reader you are still talking about a source that you just mentioned.

For example, you might use linking language that looks something like this:

- The author also explains . . .
- Fogbottom continues . . .
- The article goes on to say . . .
- The data set also demonstrates . . .

By using this kind of language, you make it clear to the reader that you're still talking about a source. And while you'll use this type of language throughout any researched essay whether you're also using parenthetical citations or not, as we mentioned above, sometimes this linking language will be all you need for in-text citation.

Let's look back at the last Fogbottom example from above, and imagine you wanted to add two more sentences from the same source. **The linking language is highlighted:**

EXAMPLE 3:

In the article, "Grooming Poodles for Fun and Profit," Jonas Fogbottom says that although it takes a long time to become a skilled poodle groomer, it's well worth the effort and leads to a good career. **Fogbottom goes on to explain** how one is trained in the art of dog and poodle grooming. **The article also gives** a set of resources for people who want to know more about a dog grooming career.

Using the linking language makes it absolutely clear to your reader that you are still talking about a source.

3. Use a Parenthetical Citation

[Edit section](#)

A parenthetical citation is a citation enclosed within parentheses.

TIP

Whatever comes first in the Works Cited citation is what will go into the parentheses in a parenthetical citation. Most often that item is an author's last name, but sometimes it's a title or abbreviated title of an article or other type of text. This is another good reason for starting by creating a Works Cited entry the moment you begin working with a source.

The classic parenthetical citation includes the author's name and, if there is one, a page number. To learn more about parenthetical citation and see some examples, see the Purdue OWL article on "[MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics](#)" (available from owl.english.purdue.edu).

Here's an **example**:

EXAMPLE 4:

(Fogbottom 16)

If there are **two authors**, list both (with a page number, if available):

EXAMPLE 5:

(Smith and Jones 24)

If there are **three or more authors**, list the first author only and add "et al."* (with a page number, if available):

EXAMPLE 6:

(Smith et al. 62)

**et al* means “and others.” If a text or source has three or more authors, MLA style has us just list the first one with *et al*.

But my source doesn't have page numbers!

If you are using an electronic source or another kind of source with no page numbers, just leave the page number out:

(Fogbottom)

If you're **quoting or paraphrasing someone who was cited by the author of one of your sources**, then that's handled a bit differently. For example, what if you quote Smith, but you found that quote in the article by Fogbottom. In this case, you should introduce the speaker (Smith) as described above, and then cite the source for the quote, like this:

EXAMPLE 7:

(qtd. in Fogbottom)

But my source doesn't have an author!

This happens sometimes. Many useful documents, like government publications, organizational reports, and surveys, don't list their authors. On the other hand, sometimes no clearly listed author can be a red flag that a source is not entirely trustworthy or is not researched well enough to be a reliable source for you.

If you encounter a source with no author, do look for other indicators that it is a good (or poor) source—who published it, does it have an appropriate list of references, is it current information, is it unbiased?

If you determine that this source is an appropriate source to use, then, when you create your in-text citation for it, you will simply use the title of the source (article, chapter, graph, film, etc.) in the place where you would have used the author's name. If the title is long, you should abbreviate by listing the first one or two words of it (with a page number, if available).

Let's imagine you're working with a newspaper article entitled, “What's New in Technology,” enclosed in quotation marks to indicate that this is an article title, and with no known author. Here's what that would look in a parenthetical citation:

EXAMPLE 8:

(“What's New” B6)

If there is no author and you're working with an electronic article, use the first one or two words in your parenthetical citation, again, enclosed in quotation marks. Let's imagine you're working with a web article entitled, “Pie Baking for Fun and Profit” and with no author. Here's what that would look in a parenthetical citation:

EXAMPLE 9:

(“Pie Baking”)

The parenthetical citation should be added at the end of the sentence that contains the source material. Let's go back to the Fogbottom example and see how a parenthetical citation would work:

EXAMPLE 10:

“Poodle grooming is a labor of love. It takes years of practice to be good at it, but once learned, it's a fun and worthwhile career” (Fogbottom).

Here's what it would look like if we used it with a paraphrase instead of a quotation:

EXAMPLE 11:

Although it takes a long time to become a skilled poodle groomer, it's well worth the effort and leads to a good career (Fogbottom).

Note that the citation is placed at the end of the sentence; the period comes after the parentheses. Misplacing the period is one of the most common formatting errors made by students.

Using parenthetical citation makes it crystal clear that a sentence comes from source material. This is, by far, the easiest way to cite or identify your source materials, too.

If using parenthetical citations is easy, why would we bother with using introduction or linking language to identify sources?

Good question! There would be nothing wrong with only using parenthetical citations all the way through your writing—it would absolutely do the job of citing the material. But, it wouldn't read smoothly and would feel somewhat rough because every time a parenthetical citation popped up, the reader would be “stopped” in place for a moment. Using a combination of introduction, linking language, and parenthetical citation, as needed, makes the writing smoother and easier to read. It also integrates the source material with the writer's ideas. We call this synthesis, and it's part of the craft of writing.

Works Cited Entries

[Edit section](#)

At the end of texts that have drawn from existing sources, you will often find a Works Cited page. This page gives more information than the parenthetical citations do about what kinds of sources were referenced in this work and where they can be found if the reader would like to know more about them. These entries all follow a specific and consistent format so that it is easy for readers to find the information they are looking for and so the shape and type of that information is consistent no matter who is writing the entries.

Until recently, the MLA required a slightly different format for every type of source—an entry for a Youtube video required certain information that was different from an entry for a book that was different from an entry for an online article. The most recent version of MLA, though—MLA 8—has simplified this so there is just one format rather than many.

You can learn how to create works cited entries in MLA 8 format, and see an example, in the “[Creating a Works Cited Page](#)” appendix to this text.

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10.8: Using Modern Language Association (MLA) Style

MLA style is often used in the liberal arts and humanities. Like APA style, it provides a uniform framework for consistency across a document in several areas. MLA style provides a format for the manuscript text and parenthetical citations, or in-text citations. It also provides the framework for the works cited area for references at the end of the essay. MLA style emphasizes brevity and clarity. Remember that your writing represents you in your absence. The correct use of a citation style demonstrates your attention to detail and ability to produce a scholarly work in an acceptable style, and it can help prevent the appearance or accusations of plagiarism.

If you are taking an English, art history, or music appreciation class, chances are that you will be asked to write an essay in MLA format. One common question goes something like “What’s the difference?” referring to APA and MLA style, and it deserves our consideration. The liberal arts and humanities often reflect works of creativity that come from individual and group effort, but they may adapt, change, or build on previous creative works. The inspiration to create something new, from a song to a music video, may contain elements of previous works. Drawing on your fellow artists and authors is part of the creative process, and so is giving credit where credit is due.

A reader interested in your subject wants not only to read what you wrote but also to be aware of the works that you used to create it. Readers want to examine your sources to see if you know your subject, to see if you missed anything, or if you offer anything new and interesting. Your new or up-to-date sources may offer the reader additional insight on the subject being considered. It also demonstrates that you, as the author, are up-to-date on what is happening in the field or on the subject. Giving credit where it is due enhances your credibility, and the MLA style offers a clear format to use.

Uncredited work that is incorporated into your own writing is considered plagiarism. In the professional world, plagiarism results in loss of credibility and often compensation, including future opportunities. In a classroom setting, plagiarism results in a range of sanctions, from loss of a grade to expulsion from a school or university. In both professional and academic settings, the penalties are severe. MLA offers artists and authors a systematic style of reference, again giving credit where credit is due, to protect MLA users from accusations of plagiarism.

MLA style uses a citation in the body of the essay that links to the works cited page at the end. The in-text citation is offset with parentheses, clearly calling attention to itself for the reader. The reference to the author or title is like a signal to the reader that information was incorporated from a separate source. It also provides the reader with information to then turn to the works cited section of your essay (at the end) where they can find the complete reference. If you follow the MLA style, and indicate your source both in your essay and in the works cited section, you will prevent the possibility of plagiarism. If you follow the MLA guidelines, pay attention to detail, and clearly indicate your sources, then this approach to formatting and citation offers a proven way to demonstrate your respect for other authors and artists.

Five Reasons to Use MLA Style

[Edit section](#)

1. To demonstrate your ability to present a professional, academic essay in the correct style
2. To gain credibility and authenticity for your work
3. To enhance the ability of the reader to locate information discussed in your essay
4. To give credit where credit is due and prevent plagiarism
5. To get a good grade or demonstrate excellence in your writing

Before we transition to specifics, please consider one word of caution: consistency. If you are instructed to use the MLA style and need to indicate a date, you have options. For example, you could use an international or a US style:

- **International style:** 18 May 1980 (day/month/year)
- **US style:** May 18, 1980 (month/day/year)

If you are going to the US style, be consistent in its use. You have many options when writing in English as the language itself has several conventions, or acceptable ways of writing particular parts of speech or information. For example, sometimes there is the question, “Which convention is preferred in MLA style?”:

1. twentieth century
2. Twentieth Century
3. 20th century
4. 20th Century

You will find the answer to this question at end of this section marked by an asterisk [*]. Now you may say to yourself that you won't write that term and it may be true, but you will come to a term or word that has more than one way it can be written. In that case, what convention is acceptable in MLA style? This is where an MLA resource is invaluable. Again, your attention to detail and the professional presentation of your work are aspects of learning to write in an academic setting.

Now let's transition from a general discussion on the advantages of MLA style to what we are required to do to write a standard academic essay. We will first examine a general "to do" list, then review a few "do not" suggestions, and finally take a tour through a sample of MLA features. Links to sample MLA papers are located at the end of this section.

NOTE

General MLA List

1. Use standard white paper (8.5 × 11 inches).
2. Double space the essay and quotes.
3. Use Times New Roman 12-point font.
4. Use one-inch margins on all sides
5. Indent paragraphs (five spaces or 1.5 inches).
6. Include consecutive page numbers in the upper-right corner.
7. Use italics to indicate a title, as in *Writing for Success*.
8. On the first page, place your name, course, date, and instructor's name in the upper-left corner.
9. On the first page, place the title centered on the page, with no bold or italics and all words capitalized.
10. On all pages, place the header, student's name + one space + page number, 1.5 inches from the top, aligned on the right.

Tip

[Edit section](#)

Depending on your field of study, you may sometimes write research papers in either APA or MLA style. Recognize that each has its advantages and preferred use in fields and disciplines. Learn to write and reference in both styles with proficiency.

Title Block Format

[Edit section](#)

You never get a second chance to make a first impression, and your title block (not a separate title page; just a section at the top of the first page) makes an impression on the reader. If correctly formatted with each element of information in its proper place, form, and format, it says to the reader that you mean business, that you are a professional, and that you take your work seriously, so it should, in turn, be seriously considered. Your title block in MLA style contributes to your credibility. Remember that your writing represents you in your absence, and the title block is the tailored suit or outfit that represents you best. That said, sometimes a separate title page is necessary, but it is best both to know how to properly format a title block or page in MLA style and to ask your instructor if it is included as part of the assignment.

NOTE

First Page Formatting

Your name

Instructor

Course number

Date

Title of Paper

Paragraphs and Indentation

[Edit section](#)

Make sure you indent five spaces (from the left margin). You'll see that the indent offsets the beginning of a new paragraph. We use paragraphs to express single ideas or topics that reinforce our central purpose or thesis statement. Paragraphs include topic sentences, supporting sentences, and conclusion or transitional sentences that link paragraphs together to support the main focus of the essay.

Tables and Illustrations

[Edit section](#)

Place tables and illustrations as close as possible to the text they reinforce or complement. Here's an example of a table in MLA.

Table 13.2

Sales Figures by Year	Sales Amount (\$)
2007	100,000
2008	125,000
2009	185,000
2010	215,000

As we can see in Table 13.2, we have experienced significant growth since 2008.

This example demonstrates that the words that you write and the tables, figures, illustrations, or images that you include should be next to each other in your paper.

Parenthetical Citations

[Edit section](#)

You must cite your sources as you use them. In the same way that a table or figure should be located right next to the sentence that discusses it (see the previous example), parenthetical citations, or citations enclosed in parenthesis that appear in the text, are required. You need to cite all your information. If someone else wrote it, said it, drew it, demonstrated it, or otherwise expressed it, you need to cite it. The exception to this statement is common, widespread knowledge. For example, if you search online for MLA resources, and specifically MLA sample papers, you will find many similar discussions on MLA style. MLA is a style and cannot be copyrighted because it is a style, but the seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook* can be copyright protected. If you reference a specific page in that handbook, you need to indicate it. If you write about a general MLA style issue that is commonly covered or addressed in multiple sources, you do not. When in doubt, reference the specific resource you used to write your essay.

Your in-text, or parenthetical, citations should do the following:

- Clearly indicate the specific sources also referenced in the works cited
- Specifically identify the location of the information that you used
- Keep the citation clear and concise, always confirming its accuracy

Works Cited Page

[Edit section](#)

After the body of your paper comes the works cited page. It features the reference sources used in your essay. List the sources alphabetically by last name, or list them by title if the author is not known as is often the case of web-based articles. You will find links to examples of the works cited page in several of the sample MLA essays at the end of this section.

As a point of reference and comparison to our APA examples, let's examine the following three citations and the order of the information needed.

Citation Type	MLA Style	APA Style
Website	Author's Last Name, First Name. Title of the website. Publication Date. Name of Organization (if applicable). Date you accessed the website. <URL>.	Author's Last Name, First Initial. (Date of publication). Title of document. Retrieved from URL
Online article	Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." Title of the website. Date of publication. Organization that provides the website. Date you accessed the website.	Author's Last name, First Initial. (Date of publication). Title of article. <i>Title of Journal, Volume(Issue)</i> . Retrieved from URL
Book	Author's Last Name, First Name. <i>Title of the Book</i> . Place of Publication: Publishing Company, Date of publication.	Author's Last Name, First Initial. (Date of publication). <i>Title of the book</i> . Place of Publication: Publishing Company.
Note: The items listed include proper punctuation and capitalization according to the style's guidelines.		

EXERCISE 1:

In Chapter 13 "APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting", Section 13.1 "Formatting a Research Paper", you created a sample essay in APA style. After reviewing this section and exploring the resources linked at the end of the section (including California State University-Sacramento's clear example of a paper in MLA format), please convert your paper to MLA style using the formatting and citation guidelines. You may find it helpful to use online applications that quickly, easily, and at no cost convert your citations to MLA format.

EXERCISE 2:

Please convert the APA-style citations to MLA style in the chart below. You may find that online applications can quickly, easily, and at no cost convert your citations to MLA format. There are several websites and applications available free (or as a free trial) that will allow you to input the information and will produce a correct citation in the style of your choice. Consider these two sites:

- <http://www.noodletools.com>
- <http://citationmachine.net>

Hint: You may need access to the Internet to find any missing information required to correctly cite in MLA style. This demonstrates an important difference between APA and MLA style—the information provided to the reader.

Sample Student Reference List in APA Style	
1	Brent, D. A., Poling, K. D., & Goldstein, T. R. (2010). <i>Treating depressed and suicidal adolescents: A clinician's guide</i> . New York, NY: Guilford Press.
MLA	
2	Dewan, S. (2007, September 17). Using crayons to exorcise Katrina. <i>The New York Times</i> . Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/17/ar...gn/17ther.html
MLA	

Sample Student Reference List in APA Style	
3	Freud, S. (1955). Beyond the pleasure principle. In <i>The Complete Works of Sigmund Freud</i> . (Vol. XVII, pp. 3–66). London, England: Hogarth.
MLA	
4	Henley, D. (2007). Naming the enemy: An art therapy intervention for children with bipolar and comorbid disorders. <i>Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association</i> , 24(3), 104–110.
MLA	
5	Hutson, M. (2008). Art therapy: The healing arts. <i>Psychology Today</i> . Retrieved from http://www.psychologytoday.com/artic...e-healing-arts
MLA	
6	Isis, P. D., Bus, J., Siegel, C. A., & Ventura, Y. (2010). Empowering students through creativity: Art therapy in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. <i>Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association</i> , 27(2), 56–61.
MLA	
7	Johnson, D. (1987). The role of the creative arts therapies in the diagnosis and treatment of psychological trauma. <i>The Arts in Psychotherapy</i> , 14, 7–13.
MLA	
8	Malchiodi, C. (2006). <i>Art therapy sourcebook</i> . New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
MLA	
9	Markel, R. (Producer). (2010). <i>I'm an artist</i> [Motion picture]. United States: Red Pepper Films.
MLA	
10	Kelley, S. J. (1984). The use of art therapy with sexually abused children. <i>Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health</i> , 22(12), 12–28.
MLA	
11	Pifalo, T. (2008). Why art therapy? <i>Darkness to light: Confronting child abuse with courage</i> . Retrieved from http://www.darkness2light.org/KnowAb...rt_therapy.asp
MLA	
12	Rubin, J. A. (2005). <i>Child art therapy</i> (25th ed.). New York, NY: Wiley.
MLA	
13	Schimek, J. (1975). A critical re-examination of Freud's concept of unconscious mental representation. <i>International Review of Psychoanalysis</i> , 2, 171–187.
MLA	
14	Strauss, M. B. (1999). <i>No talk therapy for children and adolescents</i> . New York, NY: Norton.
MLA	
15	Thompson, T. (2008). <i>Freedom from meltdowns: Dr. Thompson's solutions for children with autism</i> . Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
MLA	

Useful Sources of Examples of MLA Style

[Edit section](#)

- Arizona State University Libraries offers an excellent resource with clear examples.

- <http://libguides.asu.edu/content.php...97&sid=1132964>
- Purdue Online Writing Lab includes sample pages and works cited.
 - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01>
- California State University–Sacramento’s Online Writing Lab has an excellent visual description and example of an MLA paper.
 - http://www.csus.edu/owl/index/mla/mla_format.htm
- SUNY offers an excellent, brief, side-by-side comparison of MLA and APA citations.
 - http://www.sunywcc.edu/LIBRARY/resea...A_08.03.10.pdf
- Cornell University Library provides comprehensive MLA information on its Citation Management website.
 - <http://www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/mla>
- The University of Kansas Writing Center is an excellent resource.
 - <http://www.writing.ku.edu/guides>

*** (a) is the correct answer to the question at the beginning of this section. The MLA format is “twentieth century.”**

Conclusion

Edit section

- MLA style is often used in the liberal arts and humanities.
- MLA style emphasizes brevity and clarity.
- A reader interested in your subject wants not only to read what you wrote but also to be informed of the works you used to create it.
- MLA style uses a citation in the body of the essay that refers to the works cited section at the end.
- If you follow MLA style, and indicate your source both in your essay and in the works cited section, you will prevent the possibility of plagiarism.

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Adaptions: Reformatted, some content removed to fit a broader audience.

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GLOSSARY

- **Academic Planner:** a schedule to plan ahead to use your study time most effectively
- **Backward-looking Transition:** rather than concluding a paragraph by looking forward, authors might instead begin a paragraph by looking back
- **Bias:** presenting facts and arguments in a way that consciously favors one side or other in an argument
- **Claim:** the point that the author is trying to make or prove; is similar to the thesis, main idea, or topic sentence
- **Claim of Fact:** a claim that presents facts to persuade readers that something existed, currently exists, or will exist
- **Claim of Policy:** a claim that attempts to persuade readers to take action
- **Claim of Value:** a claim that attempts to persuade readers to approve or disapprove of something.
- **Concept Maps:** a central idea is placed in the center of the page, lines and new circles for new ideas are added, and arrows and lines connect the various ideas
- **Connotation:** refers to definitions that are based on emotion- or experience-based associations people have with a word
- **Context Clues:** words around the unfamiliar word that give hints about its meaning
- **Copyright:** a legal term that refers to the person (or people) who own and distribute a piece of information
- **Cornell Method:** a two-column approach where the right column is used for taking notes and the left column is the “cue” or “recall” column to write the key ideas and concepts or questions in the left column. A summary box may be included at the bottom of the page to write a summary of the class or reading in your own words.
- **CRAAP:** a means of evaluating sources according to their **C**urrency, **R**eliability, **A**uthority, **A**ccuracy, and **P**urpose/**P**oint of view
- **Creative Commons:** a not-for-profit organization that collects all sorts of materials and makes them available to the public for free use
- **Critical Ear:** absorbing key points by noticing not only the words spoken, but also by noting tones, volume, and even the body language that goes along
- **Critical thinking:** clear, reasonable, reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do, and it involves being skeptical and challenging assumptions, rather than simply memorizing facts or blindly accepting what you hear or read
- **Deconstruct:** to take something large, and break it down into smaller parts
- **Denotation:** refers to definitions that are accepted by the language group as a whole, or the dictionary definition of a word
- **Effective Reading:** reading in a way to better understand, evaluate, and reflect on a written text
- **Electronic Tests in the Classroom:** allows for only true-or-false and multiple-choice questions, so it is mostly used for formative assessments
- **Explicit Thesis:** thesis statement that is directly stated
- **External Distractions:** includes elements that are outside of your thoughts and feelings
- **Figure of Speech:** a word or phrase that deviates from expectations in some way in meaning or usage
- **Fixed Time:** is time that you have committed to a certain area
- **Formative Assessments:** quizzes, unit tests, pop quizzes, and review quizzes from a textbook or its Web site that measure how well you know the fundamental material before moving on to more challenging topics
- **Forward-looking Sentence:** a statement that might conclude a paragraph (or series of paragraphs) and then prepare readers for additional paragraphs to come that cover particular topics
- **Free Time:** is just that—it is free
- **General-to-specific Organizational Structure:** an author will begin with a general concept and move towards specific ideas related to that concept
- **Implicit Thesis:** thesis statement that is implied (not directly stated)
- **Implied Main Idea:** a main idea that is not directly stated
- **Inferences:** a comprehension strategy to “read between the lines,” make connections, and draw conclusions about the text’s meaning and purpose
- **Internal Distractions:** includes thought processes, self-esteem, or confidence
- **Information Literacy:** a term that refers to being able to find and use reliable information and source materials, and being able to find the right research materials
- **Intellectual Property:** material or ideas envisioned and created by another person (books, articles, essays, stories, poems, films, photographs, works of art or craft, or even just ideas)
- **Learning Management System (LMS):** an electronic system to inform students of class assignments, grades, and announcements related to courses, along with allowing students to post assignments, communicate with instructors and/or classmates, and much more
- **List Method:** a sequential listing of ideas as they are presented
- **Logic:** refers to the science or art of reasoning to evaluate arguments and distinguish between good and bad reasoning, or

between truth and falsehood

- **Metaphor:** an implicit comparison of two things that are not alike and/or are not typically associated
- **Online Tests:** most commonly used for formative assessments, although they are starting to find their way into high-stakes exams, with the advantage of being computer graded to provide fast feedback to the student and allowing the instructor to grade hundreds of exams easily
- **Open-book Tests:** allow the student to consult their notes, textbook, or both while taking the exam
- **Open Educational Resources:** teaching and learning materials available for free use by students and teachers everywhere
- **Outline Method:** places most important ideas are numbered with roman numerals along the left margin, supporting ideas are indented and noted with capital letters, and further details designated with an Arabic number, a lowercase letter, and so forth can be added under the supporting ideas
- **Paper Tests:** the most common type of test, requiring students to write answers on the test pages or in a separate test booklet
- **Paraphrasing:** captures the idea of a text, without using any of the same words
- **Personification:** the attribution of human qualities or characteristics of other living things to nonhuman objects or abstract concepts
- **Plagiarism:** occurs when we use someone else's "intellectual property" without giving them credit
- **Pre-reading:** examining the text for visual clues as to its meaning
- **Pre-research:** gathering preliminary information before beginning in the research process
- **Presentations and Oral Tests:** the most complete means for instructors to evaluate students' mastery of material, because the evaluation is highly interactive
- **Problem-solving:** using knowledge, facts, and data to solve problems effectively, and specifically identify, select, and defend your solution
- **Procrastination:** a way of thinking that lets one put off doing something that should be done now
- **Purpose:** an author's reason for or intent in writing; is reflected in the words he or she uses in their writing
- **Reading to Write:** approaching reading material with a variety of tools that help prepare you to write about that reading material
- **Refute:** an attempt to disprove opposing viewpoints in an argument
- **SQ3R:** five sequential techniques you should use to read a book: **S**urvey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite and **R**evue
- **STAR Method:** a method for evaluating an author's support for their claim based on **S**ufficiency, **T**ypicality, **A**ccuracy, and **R**elevance
- **Scanning:** to get an overview of the text you are reading as a whole; used to find a particular piece of information
- **Signposts:** words or phrases that indicate where an author is in the process of organizing an idea
- **Simile:** a direct comparison of two things using the words *like* or *as*
- **Specific-to-general Organizational Structure:** an author will begin with specific ideas about a concept and move towards general, vague statements about that concept
- **Spectrum of Authority Strategy:** assists you in identifying the "hot" end of an argument—feelings, beliefs, cultural influences, and societal influences—and the "cold" end of an argument—scientific influences
- **Summary:** captures the main point and major details of a text
- **Summative Assessments:** include midterms and finals that measure how well you have mastered a large portion of the material
- **Supporting Details:** information (facts, examples, support) that further explains the topic, and that directly relates to the main idea of a reading
- **Take-home Tests:** similar to open-book tests except you have the luxury of time on your side
- **Text Coding (Annotating):** tracking your thinking while reading that entails marking the text and recording what you are thinking while monitoring your comprehension. The following steps are also taken: mark important arguments and key facts and indicate where you agree and disagree or have further questions
- **Thesis Statement:** conveys the primary message of an entire piece of text
- **Time Management:** how people use their time
- **Time Personality:** the time of day in which someone prefers to work; the time of day one feels at their best to accomplish tasks
- **Tone:** the overall emotional attitude or stance an author has toward his or her subject
- **Topic:** is the general subject of the reading
- **Topic Sentence:** organize and sub-divide the overall goals of a writing into individual components and is considered the unifying force in the paragraph; each paragraph will have a topic sentence
- **Transitions:** form logical connections between ideas and give readers clues that reveal how you are to think about (process, organize, or use) the topics presented; they signal the order of ideas, highlight relationships, unify concepts, and let readers know what's coming next or remind them about what's already been covered
- **Wiki:** a website that functions as a public, open encyclopedia or collection of information

INDEX

No index terms found.

GLOSSARY

S

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

DETAILED LICENSING

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