

WRITING FOR SUCCESS



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Book: Writing for Success (Weaver et al.)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Licensing

Permissions and Copyright

1: Instructor Manual

- 1.1: How To Use This Book
- 1.2: Introduction to Writing
- 1.3: The Writing Process
- 1.4: Rhetorical Modes of Writing
- 1.5: Composing A Research Project
- 1.6: Grammar
- 1.7: Permissions and Copyright

2: Introduction to Writing

- 2.1: Writing to Be Read
- 2.2: Purpose, Audience, and Content
- 2.3: Using Sources
- 2.4: Writing Thesis Statements
- 2.5: Organizing Your Writing
- 2.6: Writing Paragraphs

3: The Writing Process

- 3.1: Prewriting
- 3.2: Outlining
- 3.3: Drafting
- 3.4: Revising and Editing

4: Rhetorical Modes of Writing

- 4.1: Rhetorical Modes of Writing
- 4.2: Description
- 4.3: Classification
- 4.4: Process Essay
- 4.5: Definition
- 4.6: Comparison and Contrast
- 4.7: Cause and Effect
- 4.8: Persuasion

5: Composing a Research Project

- 5.1: The Purpose of Research Writing
- 5.2: Choosing Your Topic
- 5.3: Applying Your Research
- 5.4: Gathering Your Sources
- 5.5: Documenting Your Source Material
- 5.6: Revising Your Draft

- [5.7: Digital Research Projects](#)

[6: Grammar](#)

- [6.1: Components of a Sentence](#)

[10: Capitalization](#)

- [10.1: Capitals](#)
- [10.2: Key Takeaways](#)

[11: Diction and Spelling](#)

- [11.1: Prefixes](#)
- [11.2: Suffixes](#)
- [11.3: Commonly Confused Words](#)
- [11.4: Slang, Cliche, and Overly General Words](#)
- [11.5: Spelling Rules](#)
- [11.6: Homonyms](#)
- [11.7: Commonly Misspelled Words](#)
- [11.8: Key Takeaways](#)

[7: Syntax](#)

- [7.1: Parts of a Sentence](#)
- [7.2: Types of sentences](#)
- [7.3: Common Sentence Errors](#)
- [7.4: Parallelism](#)
- [7.5: Appositives](#)

[8: Verbs](#)

- [8.1: Verb Forms](#)
- [8.2: Passive Verb](#)
- [8.3: Gerunds and Infinitives](#)
- [8.4: Modals](#)
- [8.5: Phrasal Verbs](#)
- [8.6: Subject-Verb Agreement](#)

[9: Pronouns](#)

- [9.1: Pronouns](#)

[Index](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Detailed Licensing](#)

Licensing

A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in [Back Matter/Detailed Licensing](#).

Permissions and Copyright

Successful College Composition, Edition 2

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Instructor Manual

- [1.1: How To Use This Book](#)
- [1.2: Introduction to Writing](#)
- [1.3: The Writing Process](#)
- [1.4: Rhetorical Modes of Writing](#)
- [1.5: Composing A Research Project](#)
- [1.6: Grammar](#)
- [1.7: Permissions and Copyright](#)

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1.1: How To Use This Book

Introduction

Dear Professors,

Welcome to *Successful College Composition, Edition 2 (SCC)*. We hope that you can use this book in a variety of ways in your composition classrooms. This edition is different from the previous edition: it is now a web-based book and adapted to the Brightspace D2L Learning Management System (iCollege for GSU), and this instructor's manual is new.

How to use this book

Rather than being a book with one “track” to follow throughout, SCC provides a variety of possible approaches to follow while teaching your classes in the way you see fit. Its most popular use by professors is as a reference book (where students don't read it in its entirety) that professors use to teach specific composition principles or content, regardless of your section's theme.

You can have your students move successively through Chapter 3 (Rhetorical Modes of Writing) and into the research project (Chapter 4), or you can emphasize other kinds of writing (such as textual and rhetorical analysis, evaluation and assessment, and response essays) and work in the sections here that most fit your pedagogical vision.

You can import individual modules or pages *into your own* class LMS sites and you can change the modules and pages as you see fit, adding or editing language or exercises and activities. **You have our permission and encouragement** to modify, adapt, mix, and arrange!

Note: the interactive discussions are designed to be taken **within** the chapter and sections they appear in; looking at them as a separate “discussions” list will create confusion.

The Organization of this Edition

We kept most of the examples that were in the previous text, while updating a few and adding interactive discussion-based exercises throughout the chapters. Some of the exercises in the previous edition did not lend themselves well to this format, or were better as assignments, so we deleted a number of these or combined them with others.

Where we could provide links to resources outside the book instead of rewriting that section of the book, we did so.

Because many composition teachers change their assignments and the readings they base those assignments on from term to term, we felt that it would be less useful to include more example assignments--what we gained in specificity we would lose in flexibility.

Each chapter of the book comes with an Instructor's Manual section that provides guidance and suggestions for using that section, as well as links. We hope that you find this useful in your courses!

Acknowledgements

This textbook and this manual were written, edited, and formatted by a committee of six people in SY 2018-2019: Lynne Bost, Barbara Hall, Michelle Kassorla, Karen McKinney-Holley, Kirk Swenson, and Rebecca Weaver (Managing Editor / Project Lead).



Michelle Kassorla was the Formatting Lead for the conversion of the old PDF version to the html / modularized version.

Perimeter College's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) created the non-modularized HTML version in Summer 2019.

Lynne Bost, Rebecca Weaver, Kirk Swenson, Karen McKinney-Holley, Barbara Hall.

The book and this manual therefore reflect a variety of tones, styles, and approaches. We believe this adds to the use-value of this book.

A note to GSU and Perimeter College Faculty on Supplement ation of this Textbook

In our
surveying of
GSU faculty
about this book,
we received
requests to
provide
supplemental
materials such
as sample



papers, worksheets, and exercises. The textbook revision committee decided that, except for the exercises in Chapter 5 (the grammar and conventions chapter), most other supplements would go best in an online resource library in iCollege to which we invite all English professors to contribute (if you're not part of the GSU system, we hope that your school has some kind of "resource bank" with examples and other help).

This resource library is being created by the English department and is a joint venture between chairs, the textbook committee, the Gateways to Completion committee, and CETL. Please feel encouraged to upload your assignment sheets, exercises, and sample papers.

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1.2: Introduction to Writing

The Introduction to Writing section is about helping your students understand the rhetorical situations they'll be writing for in a college classroom or work setting. It helps students understand that writing is a skill, not a magic ability.

You can use this chapter in the beginning of the term to help your students understand context and audience, as well as understand the writing situations they may encounter in college. If you are part of the GSU system, you can access the online resource library, which contains numerous example assignments, assignment scaffolds, and worksheets that cover some of this material.

Here is how you can use each section in this chapter

Section 1.2.1

This section begins with a broad overview of writing in various contexts and it provides general advice on approaching writing assignments, especially on how to start them and avoid writer's block. We then move to a more specific focus on Voice and Focus. You could design other exercises that model the weak/strong voice example and exercises we include there if you feel like your students need more practice than the one we include.

Section 1.2.2

This section has as its focus some of the common assignments students will likely encounter in your class or other classes at college, asking them to consider audience, tone, and purpose while getting to know what professors mean when they say words like "analyze" or "evaluate." An exercise you could do with your students is have groups read the same text, but then have each group perform a different intellectual task. For example, one group would analyze, one would evaluate, and so on.

Section 1.2.3

This section is on source use, a concept many students are unfamiliar with, especially at an "access institution," where the editors for this book teach. Because students write various projects where they need to use sources well, we put this in the beginning of the book. It starts with the basic question of what a source is and how professors think about (and expect their students to think about) sources. It moves through the basics of how and why to cite sources effectively, efficiently, and ethically. you and your students will notice that the language here about source use will be reinforced in Chapter 4, when students begin research projects.

It ends with a strongly-worded warning against using online paraphrasing tool. A simple exercise asking students to put a paragraph into an online paraphrasing tool, comparing that to the original, then actually paraphrasing without the tool, can be done by individuals or groups.

Sections 1.2.4 (Thesis statements)

Sections 1.2.5 (Organization)

Sections 1.2.6 (Paragraphs)

These sections address specific concerns that many composition professors have about the day-to-day skills and components of writing papers, and how you use them will depend on your assignment sequencing. If you start with smaller and lower-stakes papers that work on paragraphs and organization, perhaps pairing with the material in chapter 3, you could begin with 1.6, then move backwards. However, if you start with an argumentative paper, you may want to start with 1.4.

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1.3: The Writing Process

The Writing Process walks your students through the recursive process of prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, emphasizing that the process is not a linear step-by-step process but a recursive process of revision.

For many of your students, the idea of writing as a process may be unfamiliar because the bulk of their writing experience has been in timed situations in the classroom. Under the pressure of time, they do not think they have time for prewriting and outlining. Their first draft is their only draft, and often they have not even proofread their writing, and the idea of continually revising what they have written is foreign.

For the first essay, it is helpful to model the process in class. Students can easily follow the example provided in the text following the writer named Mariah. For each essay assignment, it is helpful to remind your students to revisit the components of the process as they write.

Note

Not all of the exercises in Chapter 2 are mentioned in this chapter of the Instruction Manual. Those not mentioned are either self-explanatory or fit with another that we explain below.

1.3.1: Prewriting: Choosing a Topic

Whether you provide a topic or students choose their own topics, students need to be introduced to the idea of purpose and audience. The initial answer students give is that the purpose for writing is to get a grade and the audience is the instructor. Explain that in each essay, whether the purpose is to inform, explain, persuade, or another purpose, knowing why one is writing the essay is essential to being able to stay on track.

Purpose: In the classroom setting, emphasize that purpose is not just for a grade. Help students identify times in their lives when they may be called upon to produce a written document—job, letter of justification (for insurance, etc.), police report, letter of recommendation, etc. Students often think they will only encounter writing assignments in college.

Audience: Identifying the purposes for different types of writing should lead naturally to a discussion of target audiences beyond the instructor and classmates.

Prewriting Techniques: Brainstorming

Students often think they should not use prewriting techniques if they have a time limit, such as for an essay exam. Demonstrate how taking a few minutes to jot down ideas and complete rudimentary organization saves time and produces more well-organized and complete answers.

Experience and Observations

Presenting experience and observation as valid starting points for an essay often helps students overcome anxieties about writing that produce writer's block.

Reading

It is helpful to have students respond to a short reading to emphasize the importance of reading for information. Discuss how to avoid plagiarism (see chapter 1.3).

It is helpful to have students try each of the prewriting exercises so they can both identify which works best for them individually and develop an arsenal of tools to select from depending on the writing task.

Freewriting Example

Remind students that experience and observation are valid topic sources for topics of freewriting. Emphasize not stopping to think hard but just writing whatever comes to mind, even an idea does not seem to fit.

? Exercise 1.3.1

Let students know they are not limited to the suggested topics. If you do limit students to the listed topics, you may do a follow-up exercise by grouping them according to the topics they chose and have them share their ideas, further discuss purpose, audience and tone.

? Exercise 1.3.1

Like the example, you can have the students use the same topic used for Exercise 1, Freewriting.

Students will probably have had previous experience with listing, referring to it as brainstorming. Using the 5 questions can help them begin to focus their topic and their questions at issue about that topic.

? Exercise 1.3.1

Again, it is helpful to have students use the same topic used in Exercises 1 and 2. They can highlight key words in the free write and answers to questions and compare those key words to the list. Liken the list to a shopping list and “cluster” map it based on different sections in the grocery store.

You may want the students to select a topic for an upcoming essay instead of using the same topic selected for Exercises 1 and 2. Students should complete Exercise 5: identifying the purpose and audience along with the topic selection.

Collaboration: Group students together by topic chosen and have them compare ideas, and depending on how much time you have, work together to choose one of those ideas and make it narrow enough to be addressed fully in a three-page paper.

1.3.2: Outlining

Students often state that they cannot write an outline before they write the essay. Help them understand the importance of using even a simple outline to assist with organization. It is good to model the outline format, using a sample from the previous exercises for each type of outline. If they are still struggling, introduce them to the idea of the “reverse outline,” which is where someone writes a messy / freewriting draft, then writes down, in outline form, the topic sentence of each paragraph. They then evaluate that outline for organization and order, deciding whether sentences or sections should be moved, deleted, or re-ordered. Then they write a new outline with the new structure.

📌 Note

Do not be surprised if students are unfamiliar with Roman numerals. It is helpful to show students how to format the outline in Microsoft Word. Walk through the paragraph samples, explaining each level. Show students a completed paragraph and how it relates to the outline.

If you require a formal outline for each essay or for a final research essay, present the outline as more than a prewriting technique, explaining whether a macro (topic) or micro (full sentence) outline will be required and how many levels must be included.

Overview: The YouTube video link is especially helpful for students with little experience in creating outlines.

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? Exercise 1.3.1

Students can be placed in pairs to create a sentence outline of the paragraph here about knitting. Then the pairs can share their outlines on the board or in the LMS discussion and you can have a short discussion on the differences between the outlines.

1.3.3: Drafting

Goals and Strategies for Drafting:

Emphasize that the first draft should come from the prewriting or the outline developed earlier but that variations that occur as the student writes are acceptable. Continue to stress the recursive nature of writing. Emphasize that at this stage, they need to keep writing, even if it's messy.

Making the Writing Process Work for You

The ideas given in this section are unfamiliar to students who are accustomed to writing a single draft and submitting it as a completed document. For many students, the idea of not beginning with the introduction is helpful in overcoming writer's block. Taking short breaks punctuates writing an essay as more than a "one-and-done" endeavor.

? Exercise 1.3.1

Students can use their chosen freewriting topic for this. Reaffirm that it is acceptable to move back and forth in the "process," including revising the thesis statement and revisiting purpose and audience. Reviewing their own prewriting is helpful here.

? Exercise 1.3.1

Challenge the students to relate Mariah's outline for the body paragraphs to her prewriting, thesis statement and outline. Have write down and share their reasons for their entries for sub-points 1 and 2.

As the students move through this part of the chapter, here are a couple of notes:

Writing a Title

Emphasize the title is called a "Working" title. Introduce MLA format for titles.

Drafting Body Paragraphs

Take time to review each of the types of evidence effective for providing support.

Review the sample thesis statement, topic sentence and body paragraph.

If you prefer the topic sentence for each body paragraph to be directly stated and/or positioned as the first sentence in a body paragraph, explain that the variations listed in the class are not acceptable in your class.

Have the students select either one of Mariah's body paragraphs and/or one of their own body paragraphs and apply the information contained in this section.

It is helpful to review the suggested techniques that can be used in an introduction with students, as many struggle with developing an introduction. This is also an opportunity to introduce diction.

Reviewing the "Key Takeaways" list at the end of the "Primary Support" page of 2.3 would be a good way to see whether anyone has questions or needs clarifications.

? Exercise 1.3.1

This can be done individually and then traded with a partner or put up on the board or the screen for the class to help evaluate.

? Exercise 1.3.1

You can do this in class or you could make it into a low-stakes assignment that students turn in for the next class session.

**While there isn't a formal exercise included in this section on introduction and conclusion paragraphs, you could ask students to trade these paragraphs from their own papers either before or after the full-paper peer review (described below).

? Exercise 1.3.9

Note on Peer Review: the included peer review worksheet here is one suggestion. You do not have to use this one if you have one that you like better. If you are part of the GSU Perimeter College English department, you may have access to a resource library which contains examples of peer reviews.

Consider modeling the first peer review using a sample essay from a previous class (or from a departmental publication such as Perimeter's *The Polishing Cloth*).

For the first peer review, early in the semester, it may be helpful for students to work in groups of three and collectively review portions of each student's essay (introduction, a single body paragraph, conclusion) or the full draft.

Pair students to review each other's draft or have students individually review drafts of two or three students.

? Exercise 1.3.10: Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

It is important to distinguish between revising and editing, a distinction many students have never been taught. You could run this as a large-group (whole class) discussion, or have smaller groups of 3-5 students discuss it and post their notes to the board or the screen (through your LMS discussion feature) and *then* have the class discuss as a whole.

Finally, reviewing the "Key Takeaways" list at the end of the "Revising and Editing" page of 2.4 would be a good way to see whether anyone has questions or needs clarifications. Students will likely have a hard time giving up the writing process they came in with (even if they discover that it is an inefficient or dysfunctional process), so this point in the semester would be a good time for reaffirming this process and its recursive nature.

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1.4: Rhetorical Modes of Writing

Chapter three on rhetorical modes covers narration, description, exposition (classification, process, definition, comparison/contrast and cause/effect), and persuasion as strategies for developing a college essay.

Covering all of these modes in a fifteen-week semester could be challenging. If an instructor chooses to teach writing as a process as described in chapter two of this text, three to four of the modes could be adequately covered. Ideas for incorporating writing as a process tasks are included in the sections below.

In the section below, writing tasks that can be completed in the classroom or in the learning management system are presented. Also, instructor feedback, grading rubrics and deterring plagiarism are discussed.

Collaboration

Writing assignments related to rhetorical modes in this chapter lend themselves to collaborative work in the classroom and/or in the learning management system. Collaboration among students encourages active learning where the instructor is not the only source for students to learn from. Even though some students may hesitate to work with a partner or in a small group, structuring the collaborative activity and using collaboration on a regular basis can help to ease a student's hesitation.

An example of a collaborative activity for a narrative essay is to get a sample narrative essay and have pairs of students analyze the essay for format and content. Students can be asked to identify the thesis statement, topic sentences and details in the body paragraphs.

In the learning management system in the discussion tool, students can be put in to groups and asked to analyze different parts of an essay which the instructor posts. For example, one student can analyze the introduction, another student can analyze body paragraph one, another student can analyze body paragraph two, and so on. It is helpful if the instructor gives specific questions for each student to answer in his/her discussion posting.

Other students in the discussion group can respond to one or more of their group members indicating if they agree or disagree with the analysis.

Peer Review

As part of teaching the process of writing, peer review activities allow students to get feedback from their fellow classmates. The key to helping students feel comfortable with providing feedback to one another is structuring the activities so that students are looking for specific elements based on criteria which the instructor provides. Towards the beginning of the semester, allowing students to choose their partners may help them feel more comfortable, but as the semester progresses, asking students to work with a student they have not worked with before can encourage the development of community in the classroom.

Peer review activities can focus on the outline of an essay, the rough draft of an essay, or even the final draft of an essay. Structured peer review related to an outline of an essay can include questions related to format as well as content. For example, are Roman Numerals used for the major parts of the essay? Is each level of the outline indented? Does the thesis statement include the major points? Attaching points to a peer review activity helps students take this activity seriously. Those students who do not come to class with the required part of the essay to be reviewed, lose those points associated with the peer review and must proceed to the next step of the writing process without the benefit of feedback. The instructor can circulate around the classroom to ensure each pair is on task and also provide additional feedback when needed.

Instructor Feedback

Along with the feedback provided by classmates in the peer review, students will need feedback from the instructor. Highlighting grammar errors on a diagnostic essay at the beginning of the semester can signal to students that paying attention to grammar is a necessary part of writing a college essay. If the diagnostic essay is written during class, the instructor can get an accurate assessment of students' writing ability within a time limit. Those students who struggle with grammar can be assigned the appropriate section(s) to work on from Chapter 5 (grammar) of this text. As a follow-up activity to highlighting errors, students can be asked to choose five of their grammar errors. On a separate piece of paper, they can be asked to type the original sentence with

the error underlined. Then, they can type the sentence with the error corrected and underlined. Finally, they can type the reason the error was an error.

After the diagnostic essay, an instructor can focus the feedback more on the content, organization and development of the essay. These elements can be addressed in a grading rubric which will be discussed next. Requiring students to submit the final draft in the learning management system makes it easy to attach the grading rubric to each essay and mark the rubric and make comments accordingly.

Essay Grading Rubric

Developing a grading rubric which is used on each essay provides students with the instructor's expectations for the various elements in the essay. A grading rubric also facilitates a standard of fairness, and once the instructor has used the rubric, grading time is saved.

The instructor should include features of the essay that the instructor feels are important. Below is a sample grading rubric. A rubric can have more detail than the one below or less detail. The points can change based on the difficulty of the essay. Fewer points can be given for essays towards the beginning of the semester while more points can be allotted for essays towards the end of the semester. The rubric below was developed in the rubric tool in iCollege.

Essay Final Draft Scoring Rubric (Sample)

Criteria	A/B 10 points	C 7 points	D 6 points
Introduction with Thesis	Good Introduction and Thesis	Adequate Introduction and Thesis	Inadequate introduction and/or thesis
Body Paragraphs	Good Body Paragraph Development	Adequate Body Paragraph Development	Inadequate Body Paragraph Development
Conclusion	Good Conclusion	Adequate Conclusion	Inadequate Conclusion
Grammar and Mechanics	Very few grammar errors	Average number of grammar errors	Numerous grammar errors
Format	No errors related to spacing and indenting	Few errors related to spacing and indenting	Numerous errors related to spacing and indenting
Overall Score	A/B 45 or more	C 35 or more	D 30 or more

Deterring Plagiarism

Teaching students the principles of effective, efficient, and ethical source use will go a long way toward getting students to practice using sources well. Consider best practices for teaching suggest a few methods to help students avoid plagiarism: varying written assignments semester to semester (this can be as simple as changing a small requirement within the paper), changing the readings/course texts, and clearly distinguishing between unintentional misuse of sources and plagiarism.

Here is the Writing Program Administrators' (WPA) Statement on best Practices for defining and avoiding plagiarism: wpacouncil.org/positions/WPAplagiarism.pdf

It is necessary to provide students with information concerning the academic honesty policy and provide information on how to avoid plagiarism. Having strong statements related to what plagiarism is, and the consequences of it, is a good way to begin addressing this issue.

However, statements on the syllabus are not everything and can set a tone of policing rather than teaching. So, consider a discussion activity in class or (or discussion in your LMS) where your students debate different definitions of plagiarism and source use.

Consider doing a [patchwriting opens in new window](#) exercise where you patchwrite from a source and the students are required to find the original source (through copying and pasting phrases into a search engine), highlight the patchwritten parts, and ask them to do a better job by paraphrasing ethically. Make this a graded assignment.

Moreover, students need to be taught how to cite any information they get from a source. This training can be started at the beginning of the semester with students being taught the basics of incorporating a quote. Later in the semester, when students work on a research project, they can be taught more comprehensively how to use outside sources.

Plagiarism Detection Tools

If you decide to use a plagiarism detection website or tool built into your learning management system, do so with caution. While some professors see them as useful for finding how much of a source a student might have inappropriately used without quoting, such tools can emphasize policing over teaching (because the detectors can't distinguish between mistaken source use and purposeful plagiarism). Make sure you always manually check to see what the tool has marked as "plagiarism." Also, there are growing concerns about the profit from student data that these detectors generate.

[Here is a sample of an English department rejecting the use of plagiarism detectors, with a bibliography opens in new window](#), for your information.

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1.5: Composing A Research Project

This chapter is all about research. Depending on what kind of class you have, how you design the research project will change, and we hope that this chapter can help. Here are some general guidelines:

1. In Comp 1 (English 1101 in the USG system), the “project” is often less a full-fledged term paper than it is an assignment designed to get students used to research projects at college. It doesn’t have to be long or involved--it could be just an annotated bibliography or require just a few sources.
2. Take your students to the library for a session on how to use the library’s resources for research. It’s possible your library has an instructional librarian who runs these sessions or who is aware of the curricular goals and practices of your department. If that is the case, touch base with the librarian.
3. Have a clear assignment sheet that you can share with the librarian running the session.
4. Do not let your students choose random topics. Pick a frame that is related to your course theme. This can help your students develop a couple of pretty good college survival skills: researching and learning about something they’re probably not interested in and developing interests where they didn’t think there was one. It helps you because you’re not having to arbitrarily outlaw controversial topics, it makes students less susceptible to confirmation bias, and it helps focus the whole class on the theme. For example, you could have an EngL 1101 class with the theme of “food and identity,” and you could have the students research the history of a certain kind of food or dish. In 1102, as in the major student example in this chapter, you could have the theme of controversies in higher education, with a research project investigating one of those controversies or problems.
5. The “process” as described here reflects the recursive process we’ve discussed in other parts of the book. We emphasize the importance of students checking with professors throughout, so designing short and low-stakes assignments (such as a research prospectus, followed by an annotated bibliography a few weeks later) can help students stay on the right path.

The biggest change in this chapter from the previous edition of the textbook is that all of the library database information has been taken out and replaced by videos from the GSU library website. The library websites and database subscriptions have changed, and the library created helpful videos for students. These are now in the place of many of the images and slides of database screens. The videos are accessible to anyone (not just students).

Another significant change is that all references and links to Purdue’s Online Writing Lab (OWL) have been changed to the [Excelsior Online Writing Lab opens in new window](#). Purdue’s OWL is now sponsored by advertising from Chegg, and they have changed their format to something less navigable. Because of these changes, many professors and librarians have dropped Purdue’s OWL in favor of OER sources such as Excelsior’s OWL.

In section 4.3 is a calendar that shows a six-week research project, mapped out for the example student from the end of March to the due date, May 2. A very useful class exercise is to draw a six-week grid on the board (working back six weeks) or on a document reader. Enter in the due dates for any research-related smaller assignments such as a prospectus or bibliography, and have the students copy it in their notebooks or devices, then give them a few minutes to add other commitments they may have (work, family, other class projects) to that calendar. Encourage them to place this calendar somewhere visible. It can be adjusted to include more or fewer weeks.

Finally, we added a new file to chapter 4, on digital projects. It provides helpful links to examples and to sites where students can receive help in making these projects.

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1.6: Grammar

Teaching grammar and conventions presents a special problem for first-year composition instructors because we, scholars and practitioners in our field, know that traditionally isolated grammar lessons, such as diagramming sentences and learning the “parts of speech,” do little to improve students’ writing.

Despite this, grammar errors often constitute a serious problem for our student writers, many of whom are first-generation students or ESL students, who’ve not had as much exposure to Academic Standard English expectations as students at other schools. And let’s be clear about what we mean by “grammar errors”: we are not referring to the occasional dangler or comma splice but rather to major structural errors that obstruct a sentence’s clarity and interfere with readers’ comprehension.

Composition teachers thus face a dilemma: on the one hand, we know that teaching grammar in isolation does little to improve mastery of grammar and conventions; on the other hand, we work with student writers who urgently need to improve their grammar. Below, we suggest a few ways to teach grammar within the context of our students’ writing.

The best solution is the most practical: Students can learn to control the grammatical features of their prose when they are challenged by revision tasks that require them to change the components of individual sentences within the context of extended discourse that they are invested in and care about.

Such tasks engage students in a process of trial and error as they work toward greater clarity and stylistic effect within individual sentences, even as they work toward making multiple sentences function coherently within a paragraph.

This approach is distinctly different from having students fill in blanks with correct answers or mark disconnected sentences in a textbook. Moreover, it is particularly effective when the sentences being revised are the student’s own, derived from her own draft of a paper still in process.

In a first-year writing class that emphasizes revision, replete with peer review sessions and writing workshops, there are ample opportunities to address grammar problems this way.

Equipping students with rudimentary knowledge of some grammatical terms and principles can expedite this approach, and here is where the explanations and exercises in this textbook may be useful.

In other words, to a great extent the grammar section of this textbook will best be used as a reference work, a compendium of concepts to be applied as need arises as teacher and students go about the work of sentence revision. The instructor will find, generally, that concepts covered early in the chapter have broader reach and applicability than those covered later.

The following are rhetorical tasks that require students to work constructively with grammatical units in meaningful, pragmatic contexts:

1. **Sharing errors:** Before returning a set of drafts to students, the instructor uses a highlighter to mark one problematic sentence in each student’s draft. No corrections are made to the sentence. After papers are returned, students form groups of three or four. Each student shares with his group the highlighted sentence in his draft, along with the passage in which it appears, and the group collectively goes to work to diagnose the problem and rewrite the sentence correctly. A useful follow-up exercise is to ask each group to share with the class the most challenging of the highlighted sentences they corrected (or attempted to correct). If a document projector is available, the challenging sentences can be presented to the entire class and various revisions discussed.
2. **Combining kernel sentences:** Almost any passage of prose can be transformed into a challenging sentence-combining exercise if the instructor reduces the original sentences to their kernel constituents. Students are then asked to recombine the kernels into effective compound and complex sentences. The passage can be selected for its relevance to whatever is on the agenda. For example, in a unit on summarizing, a summary from an annotated bibliography could be broken into constituent kernels; students could then be challenged to transform them into a coherent paragraph.
3. Example of kernel sentence exercise derived from a teacher-written annotation of a Rolling Stone interview:
4. Kernel Sentence Exercise
Chomsky, Noam. “Noam Chomsky: Anarchy in the U.S.A.” Interview by Charles M. Young. Rolling Stone 28 May 1992. p. 42. EBSCOhost, ezproxy.gsu.edu/login?
5.
 1. The introductory note is on Chomsky’s dual accomplishments.
 2. Chomsky’s accomplishments are in linguistics and political activism.

3. The interview focuses on Chomsky's critique of power in the United States.
4. Chomsky discusses a process.
5. In this process, ruling elites internalize and justify biases and double standards.
6. The biases and double standards are intrinsic to an exploitative system.
7. The ruling elites thrive on this exploitative system.
8. Along the way, Chomsky comments on a range of episodes in recent U.S. history.
9. The episodes range from the CIA's destruction of democracy in Guatemala in 1954 to the atrocities of the Vietnam War and the first U.S. invasion of Iraq in 1991.
10. Chomsky assesses the prospects for positive change in American society.
11. He expresses optimism.
12. He contends that the 1960's were a watershed decade.
13. In the 1960's many Americans became aware of the duplicity of their rulers.
14. They also became aware of their own democratic power to challenge a corrupt status quo.
15. Chomsky ends with characteristically dour humor.
16. He says that our leaders "know that people are basically decent. In fact, that's the only reason for all the fabrication."

Answer Key: The teacher's original annotation (students' annotations will vary):

Chomsky, Noam. "Noam Chomsky: Anarchy in the U.S.A." Interview by Charles M. Young. Rolling Stone 28 May 1992. p. 42. EBSCOhost, ezproxy.gsu.edu/login?

After an introductory note on Chomsky's dual accomplishments as both a linguist and political activist, the interview focuses on Chomsky's critique of power in the United States. Chomsky discusses the process by which ruling elites internalize and justify the biases and double standards intrinsic to the exploitative system on which they thrive. Along the way, he comments on a range of episodes in recent U.S. history, from the CIA's destruction of democracy in Guatemala in 1954 to the atrocities of the Vietnam War and the first U.S. invasion of Iraq in 1991. Assessing the prospects for positive change in American society, Chomsky expresses optimism, contending that the 1960's were a watershed decade when many Americans became aware of both the duplicity of their rulers and their own democratic power to challenge a corrupt status quo. He ends with characteristically dour humor: our leaders "know that people are basically decent. In fact, that's the only reason for all the fabrication."

1. **Paraphrasing:** A good lesson in paraphrasing emphasizes not only changing the diction of the original passage but also the sentence structure. The grammatical acumen required is of a high order because the student begins by taking apart a perfectly good sentence and must then reconstruct it (perhaps combining it with part of an adjacent sentence) in a form that is at least as effective as the original.
2. **Cloze exercises:** These can be used to target specific grammatical problems, for example, errors in verb tense or structure words such as conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs. Teachers can devise their own cloze exercises by selecting an appropriate passage and replacing targeted words with blanks. Students are challenged to fill in the blanks using context clues. A good cloze exercise, devised from an extended, cohesive passage of exposition, functions as more than a simple sentence-completion exercise. By engaging the student in the "flow" of successive sentences, it requires the exercise of grammatical competencies similar to those required by writing.
3. **Modeling:** With a little practice teachers can learn to spot passages or even single sentences from writers both published and unpublished that are worthy of modeling exercises. Parallelism, for example, is often best taught by imitation; sometimes a template with structure words provides help.

✓ Example 1.6.1

Public discourse today is stupefaction on steroids, a smothering flood surging through screens endlessly arrayed on walls, suspended from ceilings, installed in consoles, and cradled in our hands – swamping consciousness in a deluge of solipsistic self-regard.

Craft your own imitation of this sentence using the template below:

_____ is/are _____, [noun phrase with modifiers] [past participle][prepositional phrase], [past participle][prepositional phrase], and [past participle][prepositional phrase] – [-ing participial phrase].

Solution

My aunt's hand-crafted cakes are triumphs of culinary art, confections of batter mixed from the best ingredients, baked to perfection, frosted with care, and decorated with consummate skill – delighting the eye as well as the taste buds.

Answer Key to Exercises in Chapter 5

Exercise 1

1. Subject: gym
Prepositional phrase: until nine o'clock tonight
2. Subject: We
Prepositional phrase: to the store
3. Subject: student
Prepositional phrase: with the most extra credit
4. Subject: pickup truck
Participial phrase: going way too fast
5. Subject: Anita
Participial phrase: winning the race
Prepositional phrase: with time to spare
6. Subject: People
Participial phrase: working for that company
Prepositional phrase: about the merger
7. Subject: Soundtrack
Prepositional phrases: in languages from around the world
8. Subject: Juan
Participial phrase: studying intensely
9. Subject: dog
Participial phrase: soaked with rain
Prepositional phrase: all over the room
10. Subject: man
Participial phrase: offering profuse apologies
Participial phrase: strewn on the floor

Exercise 2 Note: Answers may vary.

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor's building; however, he owns several cats and a parrot.
2. Texting and driving has caused countless car accidents; consequently, the state legislature recently outlawed texting while driving.
3. Chinua won the local spelling bee, and he is going on to the district contest.
4. Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water, but flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Ashley carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer, so the tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car keys, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip; finally, he called the manufacturer for advice.

Exercise 3 Note: Answers may vary.

1. Since a snowstorm disrupted travel all over the east coast, there will be long delivery delays this week.
2. Because my neighbor had his television volume turned up too high, I banged on his door and asked him to keep the noise down.
3. While Jessica prepared the potato salad and sauteed vegetables, Ashley marinated the chicken.
4. After Romeo poisons himself, Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

Exercise 4 Note: Answers may vary.

1. Heroin is an extremely addictive drug, and thousands of heroin addicts die each year.
2. Shakespeare's writing is still relevant today since he wrote about timeless themes that include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.
3. Gay marriage was first legal in the six states of Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Main, and other states followed their example.
4. Prewriting, which includes outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping, is a vital stage of the writing process because it helps you organize your ideas.
5. After Mitch drank a strange potion that transformed him into a cat, he ate an entire bag of cat food while his cat watched him hungrily.

Exercise 5 Note: Answers may vary.

1. R. Being absent hurts a student's grade, so he or she should be in class every day.
2. C.
3. R. Hurry with your breakfast, or you will miss the bus.
4. C.
5. R. Several girls expressed concerns about course selections; therefore, changes were made.
6. R. Jim practiced the violin daily because he wanted to excel in music.
7. C.
8. C.
9. F. I had a severe case of the flu last year and spent the first three days of my illness in bed.
10. F. Because I was sick of my bed, I decided I would lie on the sofa and watch television.
11. F. I would get up only to take care of the necessities of life.
12. C.
13. F. When I was suddenly conscious again, the wind howled outside, the house was damp and chilly, and my fever soared.
14. C.
15. C.
16. F. I panicked because I was sure that I had died.
17. F. I was running a temperature between 102 and 107.
18. R. Voting is a privilege and should not be taken for granted.
19. R. Be ready for any emergency: plan ahead.
20. R. What has happened to the economy? Many Americans want the answer to this question.
21. R. A friend is always willing to help; friendship is invaluable.
22. C.
23. R. He arrived at the office late and then realized he had left his laptop at home.
24. C.
25. R. Be careful with your answer because your grade could be affected.

Exercise 6 Answers may vary.

1. The young lady on the telephone was walking the dog.
2. I heard on the evening news that there was a robbery.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller he called "Speed Racer" for the baby.
4. With his powerful foot, the explorer stopped the boulder rolling down the mountain.
5. We are looking for a babysitter who doesn't drink or smoke for our precious six-year-old.
6. The teacher served the children cookies wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman holding an umbrella walked toward the car.
8. We returned the sour wine to the waiter.
9. Driving home from work, Charlie spotted a stray puppy.
10. I ate nothing but a bowl of cold noodles for dinner.

Exercise 7 Answers may vary.

1. I was bent over backward, so the posture was very challenging.
2. Reading Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, I find it difficult to make decisions.
3. Walking in the dark, I knocked a picture off the wall.
4. Playing my guitar in the bedroom, I saw the cat dart under the bed.
5. Planning for the soccer tournament, the coaches realized the time was short.
6. Living in Mexico, I learned Spanish easily.
7. Driving to the veterinarian's office, I heard my dog whine nervously.
8. When Gotham's crime rates sky-rocketed, I moved to a quiet village.
9. I chose a romance novel from the pile of books next to the bookshelf.
10. I was chewing furiously when the gum fell out of my mouth.

Exercise 8 Answers may vary.

Shopping in the grocery store, I bought a loaf of bread for my sandwich. I wanted to make a delicious sandwich, so I spread the mayonnaise thickly. I placed the cold cuts on the bread and placed the lettuce on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife and turned on the radio. As I bit into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. As I hummed and chewed, my sandwich went down smoothly. I smiled, planning to make another sandwich just like it, but next time I would add cheese.

Exercise 9 Answers may vary.

1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and playing his guitar on weekends.
2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and quickly.
4. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning or in intervals throughout the day.

Exercise 10 Answers may vary.

1. To pay for a new car I would rather work at a second job than get a loan.
2. In the workplace your appearance is just as important as your behavior.
3. The firefighter talked more about his childhood than his job.
4. India's food is far tastier than Britain's.
5. Jim's opponent was as tall as he was and far heavier.

Exercise 11 Answers may vary.

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and a racing bike.
2. The movie offers not only plentiful action but also an important lesson.
3. My current job is neither exciting nor meaningful.
4. Jason would rather listen to his father than me.
5. We are interested in neither your vacuum cleaner nor your carpet cleaning service.

Exercise 12 Answers may vary.

1. Baby sharks, called pups, can be born in one of three ways.
2. The world's largest ocean, the Pacific, extends from the Arctic to the Southern Ocean.
3. Michael Phelps, a champion swimmer, won eight gold medals in the 2008 Olympics.
4. Speculating that the two would have a lot in common, Ashley introduced her husband, Jim, to her colleague, Dan.
5. Cacao is harvested by hand and then sold to chocolate-processing companies at the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange.

Exercise 13

1. erase
2. danced
3. washed
4. asked

5. baked OR will bake

Exercise 14

1. have wanted
2. has argued OR had argued (depending on context)
3. will have set
4. has walked
5. has offered OR had offered (depending on context)

Exercise 15

1. He prepared the food while I was watching.
2. Jinsoo will be speaking at the conference.
3. Harry was traveling to Egypt last July.
4. My foot aches, so I know it will be raining.
5. Fatima will be talking a lot when I see her. (Note: "will be seeing her" is awkward.)
6. I am yawning a lot because I feel tired. OR: I yawn a lot because I am feeling tired.

Exercise 16

1. A
2. P
3. A
4. P
5. P
6. P

Exercise 17

1. to kiss
2. to go
3. to eat
4. getting dressed
5. playing

Exercise 18

I may go to France on vacation next summer. I might visit the Palace of Versailles. I will drive around the countryside. I could imagine myself living there; however, I will not move to France because my family would miss me very much.

Exercise 19

1. My dog and cats chase one another all the time.
2. The books in my library are the best I have ever read.
3. Everyone is going to the concert except me.
4. My family is moving to California.
5. OK
6. There are the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.
7. OK
8. When is the movie going to start?
9. My sister and brother clean up after themselves.
10. Some of the clothes are packed away in the attic.

Exercise 20.

I feel that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I have three years of experience at a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication are excellent. These skills and others that I have learned on the job help me understand that every person helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always says that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciates when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feel that I am an asset to the team. I am efficient and organized. Are there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here is my resume. You can reach me by email or phone. I look forward to speaking with you in person. Thanks, Jane Fellini

Exercise 21

1. traffic = non-count
2. Forgiveness = non-count
3. apples = count and plural
4. cameras = count and plural
5. history = non-count

Exercise 22

1. A camel
2. The pastries or no article
3. The politician
4. The actor's performance
5. A goal or The goal

Exercise 23

Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. (no article needed) Stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than the sun. Did you know that the Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in the entire universe! Just like a human being, a star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. A star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in a nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of (no article needed) star-forming nebulas are astonishing. (8 corrections)

Exercise 24

1. us
2. my hers
3. he
4. his
5. it

Exercise 25

1. We
2. The pronoun "she" should be "he."
3. OK, no pronoun error
4. The pronoun "they" should be deleted.
5. OK, no pronoun error

Exercise 26

1. that
2. that
3. who
4. that

5. that

Exercise 27

1. Jeff is a dependable person who will never let you down.
2. I rode a roller coaster that was scary.
3. At the beach, I always dig my feet into the sand, which protects them from the hot sun.
4. Jackie is trying not to use so many plastic products, which are not good for the environment.
5. My Aunt Sherry, who has never been in an accident or gotten a ticket, is teaching me how to drive.

Exercise 28

1. his or her -- nobody
2. he or she -- anybody
3. its - crew
4. him or her - someone
5. its - family
6. its - school
7. himself or herself - student
8. its - singing group
9. his or her - no one
10. Its -- flock

Exercise 29

1. Who
2. who
3. whom
4. who
5. Whom
6. whom
7. who
8. Who
9. whom
10. who

Exercise 30

1. Suddenly, the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye, the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused, he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Without a doubt, green is my favorite color.
5. Hesitating, she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
6. Fortunately, the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
7. Believe it or not, the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Exercise 31

1. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet, uneventful, unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks, Todds, and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael, Nita, and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold, wet, aching fingers, he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear, precise, delicate letters.

Exercise 32

1. I asked my neighbors, the retired couple from Florida, to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt, his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor, Mr. Alamut, drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon, unfortunately, which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner, but most importantly, we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden, our network crashed, and we lost our files.
7. Alex, hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Exercise 33

1. My brother, Nathaniel, is a collector of many rare, unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes, limited edition books, and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually, he sells one collection before starting another. (5 commas)
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 20. In that time, we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting, please print out any emails, faxes, or documents you have referred to when writing your sample. (5 commas)
3. It was a cool, crisp, autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp, so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group, Garth, kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle, Raoul, and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result, no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces. (8 commas)
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15, 2019. In your submission letter, please include your contact information, the position you are applying for, and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10, but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you, HR Department. (6 commas)

Exercise 34

1. I did not notice that you were in the office; I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese; roast beef, lettuce, and cheese; or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds; there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident. (OK no semicolon needed)
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple; green, black, and brown; or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk; the air is so refreshing.

Exercise 35

1. Don't give up; you never know what tomorrow brings.
2. Our records show that the patient was admitted three different times on March 9, 2018; July 13, 2018; and November 16, 2009.
3. Allow me to introduce myself: I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.
4. Where I come from, there are three ways to get to the grocery store: by car, by bus, and by foot.
5. Listen closely; you will want to remember this speech.
6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona; Baltimore, Maryland; and Knoxville, Tennessee.
7. The boss's message was clear: lateness would not be tolerated.
8. Next semester, we will read some well-known authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Orwell. OK – correct.
9. My little sister said what we were all thinking: "We should have stayed home."
10. Trust me; I have done this before.

Exercise 36

1. Yasmin said, "I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat."
2. "Where should we go?" said Russell.
3. Yasmin said it didn't matter to her. OK – no change
4. "I know," said Russell, "let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar."
5. "Perfect!" said Yasmin.

6. "Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem?" asked Russell.
7. "I didn't!" exclaimed Yasmin. "Which poem?"
8. "'The Road Not Taken,' by Robert Frost," Russell explained.
9. "Oh!" said Yasmin. "Is that the one that starts with the line, 'Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?'"
10. "That's the one," said Russell.

Exercise 37

1. "What a beautiful child! She has her mother's eyes."
2. My brother's wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldn't believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldn't be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students' responses was unique.
6. Won't you please join me for dinner tonight?

Exercise 38

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer -- short or long?
2. I don't know -- I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what-- I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend -- if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate -- intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Exercise 39

1. I wanted to ease my stomach ____dis____comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his ____mis____matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt ____un____glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those ____anti____aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's ____non____standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a ____un____natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to ____re____locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to ____inter____act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the ____pre____cautions about watching my step.
10. A ____non____combatant is another word for civilian.

Exercise 40

1. refer + ed = referred
2. refer + ence = reference
3. mope + ing = moping
4. approve + al = approval
5. green + ness = greenness
6. benefit + ed = benefited
7. resubmit + ing = resubmitting
8. use + age = usage
9. greedy + ly = greedily
10. excite + ment = excitement

Exercise 41 (many wording possibilities exist with this exercise)

I felt very clumsy and awkward when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I struck my knee on a chair, and I felt very uncoordinated. On top of that, I kept saying "like" and "um," and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so nervous about being up there. I feel like I've been practicing this speech for hours, and I still made mistakes. It was ten minutes of me rambling about how we sometimes have to do things we don't enjoy doing. My speech was clearly proving my point. My speech was so unpolished

I'm surprised that people didn't howl. My teacher said not to worry, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become more professional in my speeches. I wonder if I have the courage to do it again.

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Successful College Composition, Edition 2

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Introduction to Writing

- [2.1: Writing to Be Read](#)
- [2.2: Purpose, Audience, and Content](#)
- [2.3: Using Sources](#)
- [2.4: Writing Thesis Statements](#)
- [2.5: Organizing Your Writing](#)
- [2.6: Writing Paragraphs](#)

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2.1: Writing to Be Read

Writing to Be Read

Imagine reading one long block of text, with each idea blurring into the next. Even if you are reading a thrilling novel or an interesting news article, you will likely lose interest in what the author has to say very quickly.

During the writing process, it is helpful to position yourself as a reader. Ask yourself whether you can focus easily on each point you make. Keep in mind that three main elements shape the content of each essay:

1. Purpose: The reason the writer composes the essay.
2. Audience: The individual or group whom the writer intends to address.
3. Tone: The attitude the writer conveys about the essay's subject

The assignment's purpose, audience, and tone dictate what each paragraph of the essay covers and how the paragraph supports the main point: the thesis.

Becoming a Successful Writer



In her book *On Writing*, Eudora Welty maintains: "To write honestly and with all our powers is the least we can do, and the most."

But writing well is difficult. People who write for a living sometimes struggle to get their thoughts on the page; even people who generally enjoy writing have days when they would rather do **anything** else.

For people who do not like writing or do not think of themselves as good writers, writing assignments can be stressful or even intimidating. And, of course, you cannot get through college without having to write--sometimes a lot, and often at a higher level than you are used to.

No magic formula will make writing quick and easy. However, you can use strategies and resources to manage writing assignments more easily. College will challenge you as a writer, but it is also a unique opportunity to grow.

Your job is to develop a writing process (discussed in detail in chapter 2) that helps you adapt to any writing situation.

Writing to Think and Communicate



Writing to Think

One purpose of writing is to help you clarify and articulate your thoughts. Writing a list of points, both pro and con, on an issue of concern allows you to see which of your arguments are the strongest or reveals areas that need additional support

- review and evaluate them,
- reconsider their validity, and
- generate new concepts.

If you are in a timed writing situation: jot down ideas in a scratch outline and work from that. Writing your thoughts down may even help you grasp them for the first time.

Don't Procrastinate: give yourself as much time as possible to complete your assignment. Budget your time so you can write the assignment in sections and still have time to edit and revise.

Writing is an essential skill you must have in order to function in the twenty-first century. Like any skill, it is something that can be acquired and refined. Some people just naturally express themselves better than others, but everyone can learn the basic craft of writing.

Writing to Communicate

Another important--and practical--function of writing is to communicate ideas. For your college classes you are required to write essays, research papers, and essay responses on tests.

If you apply to other colleges or universities, you will have to compose letters of application, respond to specific questions, or write an autobiographical sketch.

When you enter your chosen career, you may have to send emails and write reports, proposals, grants, or other work-related documents. You must correspond with clients, business associates, and co-workers.

And on a personal level, you want to contact friends and relatives. You may even find yourself responding to a community or national issue by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.



Writing is an essential skill you must have in order to function in the twenty-first century, but like any skill, it is something that can be acquired and refined. Some people just naturally express themselves better than others, but everyone can learn the basic craft of writing.

Overcoming Writer's Block



At some point, every writer experiences writer's block: staring at a blank page or computer screen without being able to put down even a single line. Your mind is blank, and panic sets in because writer's block usually happens when you are working against a deadline such as in a timed writing assignment or for a paper that is due the next day.

Even though there is nothing you can do to prevent writer's block from happening, there are several techniques you can use to help you overcome its negative effects:

Try Freewriting without Guilt: just start putting ideas down on paper. You don't need to worry about whether or not you are making spelling and grammatical errors; you shouldn't fret over organization. Keep in mind that you can always delete what you

have written once your ideas begin to flow. [Here is a link to a page with three different types of freewriting for you to try opens in new window.](#)

Follow Your Inspiration: begin by writing the section of the paper you feel best able to write. If you cannot start at the beginning, write the conclusion first, or begin writing the body of the paper. If you have an outline, you will already have the ideas and organization you need to write the body paragraphs.

Break the Writing Project into Parts: think of the paper as a series of short sections. Sometimes you can be overwhelmed by the prospect of writing a ten-page research paper, but if you break it up into manageable pieces, the assignment does not seem so daunting.

Review the Assignment: reread the instructions for the assignment to make sure you understand what you are expected to write. Look for keywords that you can research to give you insight into your topic. Often discussing the assignment with your professor can give you the clarity you need to begin writing.

Verbalize Your Ideas: discuss your ideas with a classmate, friend or family member. You can gain new insights and confidence by hearing what others have to say about your topic and sharing your misgivings with them.

Visualize a Friendly Audience: imagine you are writing the paper to a friend or someone you know well. Often the fear of rejection paralyzes your ability to start writing, so removing that obstacle should enable you to write without inhibition.

Take a Break: try working on another writing project or switch to a completely different activity. Often if you get bogged down on one subject, thinking about something else for a while might clear your brain so you can come back to the original project with a new perspective. And getting up from the computer usually unclogs any mental blocks: take a walk, wash the dishes, or play with the dog.

Change locations: try moving to another area more conducive to your writing style. Some people write best in a noisy environment while others require a place with minimal distractions. Find what works best for you.

Don't be afraid to start with a bad draft: As Anne Lamott says [in this classic essay opens in new window](#) about writing bad drafts, it's better to write a bad draft and get some material down than not to write at all. You can always go back and change or add material. The point is to start somewhere!

Remember that writer's block is only temporary.



Relax and start writing.

Voice and Focus



Selecting an Appropriate Voice

BE BOLD!

Whether you are writing an argumentative essay expressing your conviction that whale hunting should be abolished or a literary analysis of Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening*, your paper should express a distinct point of view. Your purpose should be to convince your audience that you have something worthwhile to say.

Gaining the approval of an audience depends, to a large degree, on the audience's perception of a writer: you need to present yourself as educated, rational, and well-informed. But, in doing so, you need to be careful not to lose your own voice. You should never use a wordy, artificial style in an attempt to impress your readers; neither should you talk down to them or apologize for your writing.

Choosing the Proper Pronoun Focus

One important consideration in selecting the appropriate voice for your paper is to choose the proper pronoun focus, and this is dependent upon the nature of the assignment.

1. In some instances, the **first person** ("I") is acceptable: for example, if you are writing an autobiographical sketch for an application to a university, anything other than first person would sound odd. Likewise, if you are writing an extemporaneous essay that answers a question prompting a first person response, such as "Explain why you do or do not vote," again, first person would be the obvious choice. Even within the development of an essay that takes a third person approach, if you use an example from your personal experience to illustrate a point, you can discuss that isolated example using the first person.
2. Most of the same arguments apply to the use of the **second person** pronoun ("you"). This textbook, for instance, utilizes the second person because of the unique relationship between the student/reader and the instructor/writer--most instruction manuals use the second person. Remember that in most academic writing, however, we don't use it. It's confusing and not objective enough.

As discussed in "The Use of 'I' in Writing" in this book's section on Persuasive Essays, the appropriateness of the first-person pronoun in college writing is a topic of debate. Academic writing often requires you to adopt a **third-person** focus, preferably in the plural form ("they"). Using third person enables you to avoid boring the reader by suggesting that the topic is of interest only to you; in other words, it broadens the audience appeal.

3. Using third person in the plural form also allows you to avoid making pronoun agreement errors which might occur as the natural result of imitating spoken English, which seems to favor the plural form instead of the more grammatically correct singular. For example, most people would say, "Everyone should have their book in class" instead of "Everyone should have his book in class," even though the former is technically incorrect. In addition, using third person plural eliminates the problem of sexist language and prevents the awkward use of "his/her."

However, some professors and editors find the "singular they" confusing and will require pluralization of singular nouns or singular gendered pronouns. Always ask your professor which to use.

Consider the following examples for their use of pronoun focus imagining they appeared in an essay about the validity of using source materials from the Internet:

Weak Example: As I surfed the Internet, I found a lot of articles that I couldn't trust because I didn't see any authors' names or sponsoring organizations.

Weak Example: As we surf the Internet, we frequently find articles we cannot trust because we do not find authors' names or sponsoring organizations.

Weak Example: As one surfs the Internet, one frequently finds articles one cannot trust because one cannot find authors' names or sponsoring organizations.

Stronger Example: Surfing the Internet for source information is unreliable because many articles do not indicate their authors or sponsoring organizations.

- The second example generalizes the focus better than the first, but it, too, restricts the audience.
- Changing the pronoun to "one" is also problematic because it is repetitious and awkward.
- The final example is the best to use in an essay because it emphasizes the point in an all-inclusive manner, without being redundant or sounding artificial.

Key Takeaways

Writing to Communicate

- Writing is an effective way to clarify, articulate, and communicate your thoughts.
- Writing is an effective way to clarify, articulate, and communicate your thoughts.
- Before you begin to write, adopt a voice and pronoun focus appropriate to your purpose in writing the essay.

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2.2: Purpose, Audience, and Content

2.2.1: Purpose



Identifying Common Academic Purposes

The purpose for a piece of writing identifies the reason you write it by, basically, answering the question:

WHY??

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• WHY write a play?• WHY write instructions to the babysitter?• WHY write a letter to your congressperson? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To entertain a packed theater.• To inform them of your schedule and rules.• To persuade them to address your community's needs. |
|--|---|

In academic settings, the reasons for writing typically fulfill four main purposes:

- to summarize
- to analyze
- to synthesize
- to evaluate

A **summary** shrinks a large amount of information into only the essentials, using your own words; although shorter than the original piece of writing, a summary should still communicate all the key points and key support of the original document. When you summarize, you give an overview of **what** the author says or does.

An **analysis**, on the other hand, separates complex materials into their different parts and studies how the parts relate to one another. In the sciences, for example, the analysis of simple table salt would require a deconstruction of its parts, the elements sodium (Na) and chloride (Cl). Then, scientists would study how the two elements interact to create the compound NaCl, or sodium chloride: simple table salt.

An **academic analysis** takes apart a source (an essay, a book, an article, etc.) point by point. It communicates the main points of the document by examining individual points and identifying how the points relate to one another. It focuses on **how** an author is saying or doing something. With non-fiction, this analysis is rhetorical--you're analyzing how an author makes an argument. With literature, you employ literary analysis, trying to explain how an author created this art.

A **synthesis** combines two or more items to create an entirely new item. Take, for example, the electronic musical instrument aptly named the synthesizer. It looks like a simple keyboard but displays a dashboard of switches, buttons, and levers. With the flip of a few switches, a musician may combine the distinct sounds of a piano, a flute, or a guitar, or any other combination of instruments to create a new sound. The purpose of an academic synthesis is to blend individual documents into a new document by considering the main points from one or more pieces of writing and linking the main points together to create a new point, one not replicated in either document.

An **evaluation** judges the value of something and determines its worth. Evaluations in everyday life are often not only dictated by set standards but also influenced by opinion and prior knowledge such as a supervisor's evaluation of an employee in a particular

job. Academic evaluations, likewise, communicate your opinion and its justifications about a particular document or a topic of discussion. They are influenced by your reading of the document as well as your prior knowledge and experience with the topic or issue. Evaluations typically require more critical thinking and a combination of summary, analysis, and synthesis skills.

You will encounter these four purposes not only as you read for your classes, but also as you read for work or pleasure, and because reading and writing work together, and your writing skills will improve as you read.

Remember that the purpose for writing will guide you through each part of your paper, helping you make decisions about content and style.

When reviewing directions for assignments, look for the verbs that ask you to summarize, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate. Instructors often use these words to clearly indicate the assignment's purpose. These words will cue you on how to complete the assignment because you will know its exact purpose.

2.2.2: Audience



Audience Determines Content

Thinking about the purpose of writing a report **in the workplace** can help focus and structure the document.

A summary should provide colleagues with a factual overview of your findings without going into too much specific detail.

An evaluation should include your personal opinion, along with supporting evidence, research, or examples to back it up.

To help determine a purpose for writing, listen for words such as summarize, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate when your boss asks you to complete a report.

Part of your job in college writing is to develop a writing tool set that helps you write appropriately and effectively for all kinds of audiences.

Identifying the Audience



Imagine you must give a presentation to a group of executives in an office. Weeks before the big day, you spend time creating and rehearsing the presentation. You must make important, careful decisions not only about the content but also about your delivery. Will the presentation require technology to project figures and charts? Should the presentation define important words, or will the executives already know the terms? Should you wear your suit and dress shirt? The answers to these questions will help you develop an appropriate relationship with your audience, making them more receptive to your message.

Now imagine you must explain the same business concepts from your presentation to a group of high school students. Those important questions you previously answered may now require different answers. The figures and charts may be too sophisticated, and the terms will certainly require definitions. You may even reconsider your outfit and sport a more casual look. Because the audience has shifted, your presentation and delivery will shift as well to create a new relationship with the new audience.

In these two situations, the audience--the individuals who will watch and listen to the presentation--plays a role in the development of presentation. As you prepare the presentation, you visualize the audience to anticipate their expectations and reactions. What you imagine affects the information you choose to present and how you will present it. Then, during the presentation, you meet the audience in person and discover immediately how well you perform.

Although the audience for writing assignments--your readers--may not appear in person, they play an equally vital role. Even in everyday writing activities, you identify your readers' characteristics, interests, and expectations before making decisions about what you write. In fact, thinking about audience has become so common that you may not even detect the audience-driven decisions.



When you update your status on social media, you are keenly aware of who will follow your post. If you want to brag about a good grade, you may write the post to please family members. If you want to describe a funny moment, you may write with your friends' senses of humor in mind. Even at work, you send emails with an awareness of an unintended receiver who could intercept the message.

Being aware of invisible readers is a skill you most likely already possess and one you rely on every day. Consider the following paragraphs:

Audience: Parents

Last Saturday, I volunteered at a local hospital. The visit was fun and rewarding. I even learned how to do cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR. Unfortunately, I think caught a cold from one of the patients. This week, I will rest in bed and drink plenty of clear fluids. I hope I am well by next Saturday to volunteer again.

Audience: Friends

OMG! You won't believe this! My advisor forced me to do my community service hours at this hospital all weekend! We learned CPR but we did it on dummies, not even real peeps. And some kid sneezed on me and got me sick! I was so bored and sniffing all weekend; I hope I don't have to go back next week. I def do NOT want to miss the basketball tournament!

When writing your own essays, you must engage with your audience to build an appropriate relationship given your subject. Imagining your readers during each stage of the writing process will help you make decisions about your writing. Ultimately, the people you visualize will affect what and how you write.

While giving a speech, you may articulate an inspiring or critical message, but if you left your hair a mess and laced up mismatched shoes, your audience would not take you seriously. They may be too distracted by your appearance to listen to your words. Similarly, grammar and sentence structure serve as the appearance of a piece of writing. Polishing your work using correct grammar will impress your readers and allow them to focus on what you have to say.

Audience Characteristics

Because focusing on audience will enhance your writing, your process, and your finished product, you must consider the specific traits of your audience members. Use your imagination to anticipate the readers' demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations.

Demographics: These measure important data about a group of people, such as their age range, their ethnicity, their religious beliefs, or their gender. Certain topics and assignments will require these kinds of considerations about your audience. For other topics and assignments, these measurements may not influence your writing in the end. Regardless, it is important to consider demographics when you begin to think about your purpose for writing.

Education: Education considers the audience's level of schooling. If audience members have earned a doctorate degree, for example, you may need to elevate your style and use more formal language. Or, if audience members are still in college, you could

write in a more relaxed style. An audience member's major or emphasis may also dictate your writing.

Prior knowledge: This refers to what the audience already knows about your topic. If your readers have studied certain topics, they may already know some terms and concepts related to the topic. You may decide whether to define terms and explain concepts based on your audience's prior knowledge. Although you cannot peer inside the brains of your readers to discover their knowledge, you can make reasonable assumptions. For instance, a nursing major would presumably know more about health-related topics than a business major would.

Expectations: These indicate what readers will look for while reading your assignment. Readers may expect consistencies in the assignment's appearance, such as correct grammar and traditional formatting like double-spaced lines and legible font. Readers may also have content-based expectations given the assignment's purpose and organization. In an essay titled "The Economics of Enlightenment: The Effects of Rising Tuition," for example, audience members may expect to read about the economic repercussions of college tuition costs.

Key Takeaways

Purpose, Audience, Tone and Content

- The content of each paragraph in the essay is shaped by purpose, audience, and tone.
- The four common academic purposes are to summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate.
- Identifying the audience's demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations will affect how and what you write.
- Devices such as sentence structure, word choice, punctuation, and formal or informal language communicate tone and create a relationship between the writer and his or her audience.
- Content may consist of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations. All content must be appropriate and interesting for the audience, purpose and tone.

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2.3: Using Sources

Using Sources



What are "sources" and how do you use them in college?

A source is anything that you didn't write or create; a source is anything that you are using to build something that you are writing or creating. You're probably used to thinking of sources for research papers, such as articles you found through library databases.

But you will use sources for almost ALL of your writing in college. For example, the novel, poem, or play you're reading in English is a source for the literary analysis paper you have to write; a website is a source for a market analysis in your business class; a newspaper editorial is a source for your response in a current events class; a film is the source for a film analysis; a source could be a quote you use to begin a paper in history class, and so on.

Any time that you use something that you did not write or create yourself, you are using a source.

What kinds of projects use sources?

Most of the writing that you will do here will use some kind of source. You will use sources not only in research papers and projects, but also in summaries, analyses, responses, presentations, video and audio projects, editorials, websites, blog posts, slide shows, and even personal essays. Basically, almost everything you write here will have to engage with sources in some way.

Why do you have to involve sources in your writing?

Depending on the size and scope of the writing project, you may have to build arguments based on sources you've read in class, you may have to write an argument based on research sources, you may have to write a personal response to a course text, you may have to summarize or analyze a course text, or you may have to present on a text in class.

In short, you will need to support what you communicate in the college classroom. You will need evidence. Sources are that evidence.

There is a larger philosophical reason: when you write in academia, you take part in a conversation that has gone on for centuries before you and will go on long after you. Using sources is the main way you become involved in and later help to shape that conversation. You converse both with your colleagues and professors about sources, but you also converse with the sources, and that dialogue composes a large measure of your learning.

In order to take part in that conversation, you need to understand the conventions of academic culture (even though you may be skeptical or critical of parts of that culture at times). These conventions are not only the conventions of American Standard English, but are also the conventions of good source use. This academic conversation is sometimes called the "Burkean Parlor," for the philosopher Kenneth Burke, who describes academic dialogue in this way:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had

gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.[i]

What kinds of sources should you use, and what parts of them do you use?

The type of class and the assignment will determine what kinds of sources you use. Sometimes you'll use texts that your professor has supplied, and other times, you'll have to go and do research to find outside sources. When dealing with written sources, you'll either quote, paraphrase, or summarize.

- When you quote, you use the exact wording from the source
- When you paraphrase, you put a passage or part of a text in your own words, being careful not to copy the sentence structure of the original source
- When you summarize, you give a very broad overview of a passage or a text--writing your summary in a 10th of the size of the original text

How do you use sources well in your writing?

Good source use means **ethical, effective, and efficient** source use. At the same time you are giving due credit to the creator of the source you're using or engaging, you are making it work well with your words and ideas.

Ethical Source Use means giving credit, and it also means providing the required information about the source. Giving credit in something you write may look a lot like the Burke example above, where Burke was introduced by name and then the quote was annotated. There are a number of valid ways to ethically use a source, and these often depend on what discipline you're writing in, such as English, psychology, journalism, or history.

Effective Source Use means two things: first, when you're using sources effectively, the connection between the quotations, paraphrases, and summaries of the source and your own words and ideas makes sense. Second, it means that you are the one who decides when the sources talk in support of your ideas. If you just have a series of quotes, that's not a paper. It's a list of quotes. You need to quote and paraphrase and summarize judiciously.

Efficient Source Use means that your whole paper or project isn't full of quotations or paraphrases. Writing professor Keith Hjortshoj calls this "giving up your own voice," [ii] meaning you, the student, end up letting other writers bump you off the stage, take the spotlight, and render you silent. Quote and paraphrase only when you decide it's best.

[i] Burke, Kenneth. *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. Oakland: University of California Press, 1974. 110-111.

[ii] Hjortshoj, Keith. *The Transition to College Writing*. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2001. 177-190.

Guidelines for Source Use



1. Make sure you have permission to use the source. How do you know? For the most part, you can use a small part of any written text in something you create for school, if you know you have permission and if you give proper credit. An exemption to the U.S. Copyright law says that using a small amount of a source is fine if you're using it "for commentary or scholarship."
2. Properly cite the source. This means providing information that your reader can use to find the source. In the MLA and APA citation styles, proper citation includes the in-text citation of both the page number (for MLA) or copyright year (for APA) and the author of the source, like this: (Smith 7), and the full citation at the end of the paper. Other styles, such as the Chicago style (used by historians), use footnotes instead of parenthetical in-text citations.
3. Include the full citation for the source at the end of your paper.

Explicating Sources

You can see examples of citations in Documenting Your Source Material in the chapter "Composing a Research Project."

In addition to properly citing the source, you need to integrate it well. This means both introducing cited material effectively with signal phrases and explicating quotations and paraphrases. You do not need to explicate summary, since you are giving a broad overview and don't have to explain it in detail.

In addition to properly introducing and documenting sources, writers need to explicate quotations and paraphrases. "Explicating sources" means justifying their place in your work. A good guideline to follow for explicating source material (in the form of quotations and paraphrases) is:

For every sentence of quotation or paraphrase that you use, follow it with three sentences of explication.

Those sentences should include this information:

- **"In other words":** tell your readers what the quote or paraphrase means.
- **How it supports your argument:** tell your readers how this quote or paraphrase is evidence that supports your argument.
- **Context:** provide some context for this quote or paraphrase--where in the text did it come from--the beginning, middle, or end of the original work? What is the author of the source doing or trying to do in this section or passage?

We recommend creating "source bricks" with this basic information as you are drafting your papers and projects. A "source brick" is a paragraph where you quote or paraphrase--what you use to "build" a paper:

Every time you talk in detail (more than summary) about a reference,* you need to:

- Use a [signal phrase](#)
- If quoting, use exact words and use quotation marks
- If paraphrasing, use NEITHER exact words or phrasing
- In-text citation
- Provide enough explication
- Provide the full citation at the end of the project you're working on

**a "reference" is a credible source: it's another way of saying "source."*

What to Quote

Restrict direct quotations to when an author(s) says something that just can't be paraphrased, or when an author(s) says something in a unique way.

- Quote when authors say something especially relevant or meaningful.
- Use quotes sparingly. For most of the papers you write, you won't need very long quotes--a good guideline is to use no more than three sentences (which each need three sentences of explication) each time you quote.
- Do not rely on block quotes; use those only when absolutely necessary and follow your styles' formatting rules for block quotes.



How To Begin Using Source Material

Now that you know what a source is, and how to quote or paraphrase one, where do you start?

Create **source bricks**, which are essentially chunks of text you place before and after a quotation or a paraphrase. Here is how you do it:

After you have read and taken notes on the thing (book, story, movie, article) you're writing about, find a quotation or write a paraphrase.

Use a Quotation	Write a Paraphrase
Use exact words from the source. - Use quotation marks around the quotation if the source is less than four lines long. - Use a block quotation if the source is more than four lines from a printed source. Indent entire quotation by 5 spaces on the left. Do not use quotation marks.	If paraphrasing, use NEITHER exact words or phrasing. - The paraphrase must relate the information in your own words. - Paraphrasing is best for technical information that must be simplified, or information that needs to be rephrased for a different audience than it was originally written for.

Before the quote or paraphrase . . .

- Use a signal phrase that introduces the quote or paraphrase. For example, "Emily Dickinson addresses her reader . . ."

After the quote or paraphrase . . .

- Use an in-text citation according to the most recent MLA Style Manual.
- Provide explication. Explication tells the reader how the quote or paraphrase supports the thesis of your paper.

For every sentence of quotation or paraphrase that you use, follow it with three sentences of explication. Those sentences should include this information:

- "In other words":** tell your readers what the quote or paraphrase means.
- How it supports your argument:** tell your readers how this quote or paraphrase is evidence that supports your argument.
- Context:** provide some context for this quote or paraphrase--where in the text did it come from--the beginning, middle, or end? What is the author of the source doing or trying to do in this section or passage?

When you're first beginning to write about a text, create a lot of source bricks--more than you need. Once you have a good number of source bricks, look them over and see if you can identify patterns or similarities. There's probably a reason you chose those quotes or passages, and writing source bricks about them can help you discover what you want to say about the text. As you begin to understand what you're saying, start to organize the bricks: which go next to each other? Where do you need to write connecting material or transitions? Are any bricks missing?

Why Paraphrasing tools are Garbage



You may be tempted to use an online paraphrasing tool.

Don't. These tools are useless and if you use them, your project grade will suffer. Here's why:

- These bots replace words without understanding context and without regard to the words next to them.
- The individual words may make sense, but they don't make sense in the context of the sentence where they appear.

Professors describe papers which have been at least partially written with these tools as "indecipherable," "confusing," and "gibberish."

Here is an example from an online paraphrasing tool:

Original	Online paraphrasing tool's version:
But you will use sources for almost ALL of your writing in college. For example, the novel, poem, or play you're reading in English is a source for the literary analysis paper you have to write; a website is a source for a market analysis in your business class; a newspaper editorial is a source for your response in a current events class; a film is the source for a film analysis; a source could be a quote you use to begin a paper in history class, and so on.	In any case, you will utilize hotspots for practically ALL of your writing in school. For instance, the novel, ballad, or play you're perusing in English is a hotspot for the artistic examination paper you need to compose; a site is a hotspot for a market investigation in your business class; a paper article is a hotspot for your reaction in a recent developments class; a film is the hotspot for a film investigation; a source could be a statement you use to start a paper in history class, etc.

The word "hotspots" here renders these sentences pretty confusing, for in current usage, a "hotspot" is a place where WiFi is accessible. How does a ballad provide wifi? What's a "recent developments" class?

It's not enough to only replace words. Paraphrasing is about understanding something you've read and being able to put it in your *own words and sentence structures.*

Just don't use these "tools." They won't help you.

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2.4: Writing Thesis Statements

Writing Thesis Statements



To be effective, all support in an essay must work together to convey a central point; otherwise, an essay can fall into the same trap of being out of order and confusing.

Just as a topic sentence focuses and unifies a single paragraph, the thesis statement focuses and unifies an entire essay. This statement is like a signpost that signals the essay's destination; it tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point.

Because writing is not a linear process, you may find that the best thesis statement develops near the end of your first draft; however, creating a draft or working thesis early in the writing project helps give the drafting process clear direction. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that it needs revision as the essay develops.

A thesis is not just a topic, but rather the writer's comment or interpretation of the question or subject. For whatever topic you select (for example, school uniforms, social networking), you must ask yourself, "What do I want to say about it?"

Asking and then answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is precise, forceful and confident.

In the majority of essays, a thesis is one sentence long and appears toward the end of the introduction. It is specific and focuses on one to three points of a single idea--points you are able to demonstrate in the body. It forecasts the content of the essay and suggests how you will organize your information. Remember that a thesis statement does not summarize an issue but rather dissects it.

In sum, a good thesis statement will *focus*, *forecast*, and *express*: It will *focus* your content, *forecast* your approach, and *express* an idea.

Working Thesis Statements

A strong thesis statement must have the following qualities:

- **It must be arguable:** A thesis statement must state a point of view or judgment about a topic. An established fact is not considered arguable.
- **It must be supportable:** The thesis statement must contain a point of view that can be supported with evidence (reasons, facts, examples).
- **It must be specific:** A thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and remain focused on the topic.

Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

1. Closing all American borders for a period of five years is one solution that will tackle illegal immigration.
2. Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.

3. Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
4. In today's crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough education to land a stable, lucrative job.
5. Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony in *Romeo and Juliet* spoils the outcome for the audience and weakens the plot.
6. J. D. Salinger's character in *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield, is a confused rebel who voices his disgust with phonies, yet acts like a phony on many occasions.
7. The societal and personal struggles of Troy Maxon in the play *Fences* symbolize the challenge of black males who lived through segregation and integration in the United States.

Pitfalls to Avoid:

A thesis is weak when it is simply a declaration of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay.

Weak Thesis Statement: My paper will explain why imagination is more important than knowledge.

A thesis is weak when it makes an unreasonable or outrageous claim or insults the opposing side.

Weak Thesis Statement: Religious radicals across America are trying to legislate their Puritanical beliefs by banning required high school books.

A thesis is weak when it contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a dead end.

Weak Thesis Statement: Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.

A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad.

Weak Thesis Statement: The life of Abraham Lincoln was long and challenging.

Exercise: Thesis Statements, Weak or Strong?



Read the following thesis statements. On a separate piece of paper, identify each as weak or strong.

For those that are weak, list the reasons why.

1. The subject of this paper is my experience with ferrets as pets.
2. The government must expand its funding for research on renewable energy resources in order to prepare for the impending end of oil.
3. Edgar Allan Poe was a poet who lived in Baltimore during the nineteenth century.
4. In this essay, I will give you lots of reasons why slot machines should not be legalized in Baltimore.
5. Despite his promises during his campaign, President Kennedy took few executive measures to support civil rights legislation.
6. Because many children's toys have potential safety hazards that could lead to injury, it is clear that not all children's toys are safe.

7. My experience with young children has taught me that I want to be a disciplinary parent because I believe that a child without discipline can be a parent's worst nightmare.

Thesis Statement Revision



Your thesis statement begins as a working thesis statement, an indefinite statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process for the purpose of planning and guiding your writing.

Working thesis statements often become stronger as you gather information and form new opinions and reasons for those opinions. Revision helps you strengthen your thesis so that it matches what you have expressed in the body of the paper.

Ways to Revise Your Thesis

You can cut down on irrelevant aspects and revise your thesis by taking the following steps:

Pinpoint and replace all nonspecific words, such as "people," "everything," "society," or "life," with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness.

Working Thesis: Young people have to work hard to succeed in life.

Revised Thesis: Recent college graduates must have discipline and persistence in order to find and maintain a stable job in which they can use and be appreciated for their talents.

Explanation: The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing those general words like "people" and "work hard," the writer can better focus his or her research and gain more direction in his or her writing. The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard.

Clarify ideas that need explanation by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis.

Working Thesis: The welfare system is a joke.

Revised Thesis: The welfare system keeps a socioeconomic class from gaining employment by alluring members of that class with unearned income, instead of programs to improve their education and skill sets.

Explanation: A "joke" means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for "joke" and more accurately define his or her stance, which will better guide the writing of the essay.

Replace any linking verbs with action verbs. Linking verbs are forms of the verb "to be," a verb that simply states that a situation exists.

Working Thesis: Kansas City schoolteachers are not paid enough.

Revised Thesis: The Kansas City legislature cannot afford to pay its educators, resulting in job cuts and resignations in a district that sorely needs highly qualified and dedicated teachers.

Explanation: The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word are. Linking verbs often make thesis statements weak because they do not express action. Rather, they connect words and phrases to the second half of the sentence. Readers might wonder, "Why are they not paid enough?" But this statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. Asking questions will help you replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement that takes a more definitive stance on the issue:

- Who is not paying the teachers enough?
- What is considered "enough?"
- What is the problem?
- What are the results?

Omit any general claims that are hard to support.

Working Thesis: Today's teenage girls are too sexualized.

Revised Thesis: Teenage girls who are captivated by the sexual images on MTV are conditioned to believe that a woman's worth depends on her sensuality, a feeling that harms their self-esteem and behavior.

Explanation: It is true that some young women in today's society are more sexualized than in the past, but that is not true for all girls. Many girls have strict parents, dress appropriately, and do not engage in sexual activity while in middle school and high school. The writer of this thesis should ask the following questions:

- Which teenage girls?
- What constitutes "too" sexualized?
- Why are they behaving that way?
- Where does this behavior show up?
- What are the repercussions?

Exercise: Practice Thesis Statements



On a separate sheet of paper, write a thesis statement for each of the following topics. Remember to make each statement

- specific,
- precise,
- demonstrable,
- forceful, and
- confident.

1. Texting while driving
2. The legal drinking age in the United States
3. Legalizing Marijuana for recreational use
4. Abortion
5. Racism

Thesis Statements

- Proper essays require a thesis statement to provide a specific focus and suggest how the essay will be organized.
- A thesis statement is your interpretation of the subject, not the topic itself.
- A strong thesis is specific, precise, forceful, confident, and is able to be demonstrated.
- A strong thesis challenges readers with a point of view that can be debated and can be supported with evidence.
- A weak thesis is simply a declaration of your topic or contains an obvious fact that cannot be argued.
- Depending on your topic, it may or may not be appropriate to use first person point of view.
- Revise your thesis by ensuring all words are specific, all ideas are exact, and all verbs express action.

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2.5: Organizing Your Writing

Organizing Your Writing



Chronological Order, Order of Importance, and Spatial Order

The method of organization for essays and paragraphs is just as important as content. When you begin to draft an essay or paragraph, your ideas may seem to flow from your mind in a seemingly random manner; however, your readers, who bring to the table different backgrounds, viewpoints, and ideas, need you to clearly organize these ideas to help them draw connections between the body and the thesis.

A solid organizational pattern not only helps readers to process and accept your ideas, but also gives your ideas a path that you can follow as you develop your essay (or paragraph).

Knowing how you will organize your paragraphs allows you to better express and analyze your thoughts. In addition, planning the structure of your essay before you choose supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and targeted research.

This section covers three ways to organize both essays and paragraphs: chronological order, order of importance, and spatial order.

Chronological Order

Chronological arrangement has the following purposes:

- To explain the history of an event or a topic
- To tell a story or relate an experience
- To explain how to do or to make something
- To explain the steps in a process

Chronological order is mostly used in expository writing, which is a form of writing that narrates, describes, informs, or explains a process.

When using chronological order, arrange the events in the order that they actually happened, or will happen if you are giving instructions. This method requires you to use words such as first, second, then, after that, later, and finally. These transition words guide you and your reader through the paper as you expand your thesis.

For example, if you are writing an essay about the history of the airline industry, you would begin with its conception and detail the essential timeline events up until present day. You would follow the chain of events using words such as first, then, next, and so on.

Keep in mind that chronological order is most appropriate for the following purposes:

- Writing essays containing heavy research
- Writing essays with the aim of listing, explaining, or narrating
- Writing essays that analyze literary works such as poems, plays, or books

When using chronological order, your introduction should indicate the information you will cover and should also establish the relevance of the information. Your body paragraphs should then provide clear divisions or steps in chronology. You can divide your paragraphs by time (such as decades, wars, or other historical events) or by the same structure of the work you are examining (such as a line-by-line explication of a poem).

Exercise: Organizing Chronologically



Choose an accomplishment you have achieved in your life. The important moment could be in sports, schooling, or extracurricular activities. On your own sheet of paper, list the steps you took to reach your goal. Try to be as specific as possible with the steps you took. Pay attention to using transition words to focus your writing.

Exercise: Step by Step Process



Write a paragraph that describes a process you are familiar with and can do well. Assume that your reader is unfamiliar with the procedure.

Remember to use the chronological keywords: first, second, then, and finally.

Order of Importance



Order of importance is best used for the following purposes:

- Persuading and convincing
- Ranking items by their importance, benefit, or significance
- Illustrating a situation, problem, or solution

Most essays move from the least to the most important point, and the paragraphs are arranged in an effort to build the essay's strength.

Sometimes, it is necessary to begin with the most important supporting point, such as in an essay that contains a thesis that is highly debatable.

When writing a persuasive essay, it is best to begin with the most important point because it immediately captivates your readers and compels them to continue reading.

For example, if you were supporting your thesis that homework is detrimental to the education of high school students, you would want to present your most convincing argument first, and then move on to the less important points for your case.

During your career, you may be required to work on a team that devises a strategy for a specific goal of your company, such as increasing profits. When planning your strategy you should organize your steps in order of importance. This demonstrates the ability to prioritize and plan. Using the order of importance technique also shows that you can create a resolution with logical steps for accomplishing a common goal.

Spatial Order



Spatial order is best used for the following purposes:

- Helping readers visualize something as you want them to see it
- Evoking a scene using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)
- Writing a descriptive essay

Spatial order means that you explain or describe objects as they are arranged around you in your space, for example in a bedroom. As the writer, you create a picture for your readers, and their perspective is the viewpoint from which you describe what is around you.

The view must move in an orderly, logical progression, giving the reader clear directional signals to follow from place to place. The key to using this method is to choose a specific starting point and then guide the reader to follow your eye as it moves in an orderly trajectory from your starting point.

Pay attention to the following student's description of her bedroom and how she guides the reader through the viewing process, foot by foot:

Attached to my back bedroom wall is a small wooden rack festooned with red and turquoise necklaces that shimmer as I enter. Just to the right of the rack, billowy white curtains frame a large window with a sill that ends just six inches from the floor. The peace of such an image is a stark contrast to my desk, sitting to the right of the window, layered in textbooks, crumpled papers, coffee cups, and an overflowing ashtray. Turning my head to the right, I see a set of two bare windows that frame the trees outside the glass like a three-dimensional painting. Below the windows is an oak chest from which blankets and scarves are protruding. Against the wall opposite the billowy curtains is an antique dresser, on top of which sits a jewelry box and a few picture frames. A tall mirror attached to the dresser takes up much of the lavender wall.

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

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

- Just to the left or just to the right
- Behind
- Between
- On the left or on the right
- Across from
- A little further down
- To the south, to the east, and so on
- A few yards away
- Turning left or turning right

Exercise: Order of Importance



Write a paragraph that discusses a passion of yours. Your passion could be music, a particular sport, filmmaking, and so on.

Your paragraph should be built upon the reasons why you feel so strongly. Briefly discuss your reasons in the order of least to greatest importance.

Key Takeaways



Organizing Your Writing

- The way you organize your body paragraphs ensures you and your readers stay focused on and draw connections to your thesis statement.
- A strong organizational pattern allows you to articulate, analyze, and clarify your thoughts.
- Planning the organizational structure for your essay before you begin to search for supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and directed research.
- Chronological order is most commonly used in expository writing. It is useful for explaining the history of your subject, for telling a story, or for explaining a process.
- Order of importance is most appropriate in a persuasion paper as well as for essays in which you rank things, people, or events by their significance.
- Spatial order describes things as they are arranged in space and is best for helping readers visualize something as you want them to see it; it creates a dominant impression.

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2.6: Writing Paragraphs

Writing Paragraphs



Introduction

Imagine reading one long block of text, with each idea blurring into the next. You are likely to lose interest in a piece of writing that is disorganized and spans many pages without breaks.

Paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks, each paragraph focusing on only one main idea and presenting coherent sentences to support that one point. Because all the sentences in one paragraph support the same point, a paragraph may stand on its own. For most types of informative or persuasive academic writing, writers find it helpful to think of the paragraph analogous to an essay, as each is controlled by a main idea or point, and that idea is developed by an organized group of more specific ideas.

Thus, the thesis of the essay is analogous to the topic sentence of a paragraph, just as the supporting sentences in a paragraph are analogous to the supporting paragraphs in an essay.

In essays, each supporting paragraph adds another related main idea to support the writer's thesis, or controlling idea. Each related supporting idea is developed with facts, examples, and other details that explain it. By exploring and refining one idea at a time, writers build a strong case for their thesis.

Effective paragraphing makes the difference between a satisfying essay that readers can easily process and one that requires readers to mentally organize themselves. Thoughtful organization and development of each body paragraph leads to an effectively focused, developed, and coherent essay.

An effective paragraph contains three main parts:

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

In informative and persuasive writing, the topic sentence is usually the first sentence or second sentence of a paragraph and expresses its main idea, followed by supporting sentences that help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence.

In narrative and descriptive paragraphs, however, topic sentences may be implied rather than explicitly stated, with all supporting sentences working to create the main idea. If the paragraph contains a concluding sentence, it is the last sentence in the paragraph and reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words. The following figure illustrates the most common paragraph structure for informative and persuasive college essays.

Paragraph Structure



Graphic Organizer

Topic Sentence (topic + comment/judgment/interpretation):

Supporting Sentence 1:

Supporting Sentence 2:

Supporting Sentence 3:

Supporting Sentence 4:

Supporting Sentence 5:

Supporting Sentence 6:

Concluding Sentence (summary of comment/judgment/interpretation):

Note

The number of supporting sentences varies according to the paragraph's purpose and the writer's sentence structure.



The foundation of a paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea or point of the paragraph.

The topic sentence functions two ways:

- it clearly refers to and supports the essay's thesis, and
- it indicates what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.

As the unifying sentence for the paragraph, it is the most general sentence, whereas all supporting sentences provide different types of more specific information, such as facts, details, or examples.

An effective topic sentence has the following characteristics:

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

Weak Example:

First, we need a better way to educate students.

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

Stronger Example:

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

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

A good topic sentence is the most general sentence in the paragraph and thus does not include supporting details.

Weak Example:

Salaries should be capped in baseball for many reasons, most importantly so we don't allow the same team to win year after year.

Explanation: This topic sentence includes a supporting detail that should be included later in the paragraph to back up the main point.

Stronger Example:

Introducing a salary cap would improve the game of baseball for many reasons.

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

A good topic sentence is clear and easy to follow.

Weak Example:

In general, writing an essay, thesis, or other academic or nonacademic document is considerably easier and of much higher quality if you first construct an outline, of which there are many different types.

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

Stronger Example:

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

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

Location of Topic Sentences



A topic sentence can appear anywhere within a paragraph or can be implied (such as in narrative or descriptive writing).

In college-level expository or persuasive writing, placing an explicit topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph (the first or second sentence) makes it easier for readers to follow the essay and for writers to stay on topic, but writers should be aware of variations and maintain the flexibility to adapt to different writing projects.

The following examples illustrate varying locations for the topic sentence. In each example, the topic sentence is underlined.

Topic Sentence Begins the Paragraph (General to Specific)

After reading the new TV guide this week, I wondered why we are still being bombarded with reality shows, a plague that continues to darken our airwaves. Along with the return of viewer favorites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. "Prisoner" follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season and

hope that other viewers will express their criticism. These producers must stop the constant stream of meaningless shows without plotlines. We've had enough reality television to last us a lifetime!

The first sentence tells readers that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer's distaste for these shows through the use of the word "bombarded."

Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show and why the writer finds it unappealing. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It reiterates the main point that viewers are bored with reality television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

Paragraphs that begin with the topic sentence move from the general to the specific. They open with a general statement about a subject (reality shows) and then discuss specific examples (the reality show "Prisoner"). Most academic essays contain the topic sentence at the beginning of the first paragraph.

Topic Sentence Ends the Paragraph (Specific to General)

Last year, a cat traveled 130 miles to reach its family, who had moved to another state and had left their pet behind. Even though it had never been to their new home, the cat was able to track down its former owners. A dog in my neighborhood can predict when its master is about to have a seizure. It makes sure that he does not hurt himself during an epileptic fit. Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.

The last sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It draws on specific examples (a cat that tracked down its owners and a dog that can predict seizures) and then makes a general statement that draws a conclusion from these examples (animals' senses are better than humans'). In this case, the supporting sentences are placed before the topic sentence and the concluding sentence is the same as the topic sentence.

This technique is frequently used in persuasive writing. The writer produces detailed examples as evidence to back up his or her point, preparing the reader to accept the concluding topic sentence as the truth.

When the Topic Sentence Appears in the Middle of the Paragraph

For many years, I suffered from severe anxiety every time I took an exam. Hours before the exam, my heart would begin pounding, my legs would shake, and sometimes I would become physically unable to move. Last year, I was referred to a specialist and finally found a way to control my anxiety—breathing exercises. It seems so simple, but by doing just a few breathing exercises a couple of hours before an exam, I gradually got my anxiety under control. The exercises help slow my heart rate and make me feel less anxious. Better yet, they require no pills, no equipment, and very little time. It's amazing how just breathing correctly has helped me learn to manage my anxiety symptoms.

In this paragraph, the highlighted sentence is the topic sentence. It expresses the main idea: that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to his main point (breathing exercises can help control anxiety) by using a personal anecdote (how he used to suffer from anxiety). The supporting sentences then expand on how breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The last sentence is the concluding sentence and restates how breathing can help manage anxiety.

Placing a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph is often used in creative writing. If you notice that you have used a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph in an academic essay, read through the paragraph carefully to make sure that it contains only one major topic.

Implied Topic Sentences

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

Heaving herself up the stairs, Luella had to pause for breath several times. She let out a wheeze as she sat down heavily in the wooden rocking chair. Tao approached her cautiously, as if she might crumble at the slightest touch. He studied her face, like parchment, stretched across the bones so finely he could almost see right through the skin to the decaying muscle underneath. Luella smiled a toothless grin.

Although no single sentence in this paragraph states the main idea, the entire paragraph focuses on one concept—that Luella is extremely old. The topic sentence is thus implied rather than stated so that all the details in the paragraph can work together to convey the dominant impression of Luella's age. In a paragraph such as this one, an explicit topic sentence would seem awkward and heavy-handed. Implied topic sentences work well if the writer has a firm idea of what he or she intends to say in the paragraph and sticks to it. However, a paragraph loses its effectiveness if an implied topic sentence is too subtle or the writer loses focus.

Exercise: Choose the Most Effective Topic Sentence



In each of the following sentence pairs, choose the more effective topic sentence.

- This paper will discuss the likelihood of the Democrats winning the next election.
 - To boost their chances of winning the next election, the Democrats need to listen to public opinion.
- The unrealistic demands of union workers are crippling the economy for three main reasons.
 - Union workers are crippling the economy because companies are unable to remain competitive as a result of added financial pressure.
- Authors are losing money as a result of technological advances.
 - The introduction of new technology will devastate the literary world.
- Rap music is produced by untalented individuals with oversized egos.
 - This essay will consider whether talent is required in the rap music industry.

Exercise: Evaluating Topic Sentences



Read the following statements and evaluate each as a topic sentence. Say whether the sentence is Good, Not-Good, or Not a Sentence.

1. Exercising three times a week is healthy.
2. Sexism and racism exist in today's workplace.
3. I think we should raise the legal driving age.
4. Owning a business.
5. There are too many dogs on the public beach.

Create a Topic Sentence



Create a topic sentence on each of the following subjects. Write your responses on your own sheet of paper.

1. An endangered species
2. The cost of fuel
3. The legal drinking age
4. A controversial film or novel.

Developing Paragraphs



Writers often want to know how many words a paragraph should contain, and the answer is that a paragraph should develop the idea, point, or impression completely enough to satisfy the writer and readers.

Depending on their function, paragraphs can vary in length from one or two sentences, to over a page; however, in most college assignments, successfully developed paragraphs usually contain approximately one hundred to two hundred and fifty words and span one-fourth to two-thirds of a typed page.

A series of short paragraphs in an academic essay can seem choppy and unfocused, whereas paragraphs that are one page or longer can tire readers. Giving readers a paragraph break on each page helps them maintain focus.

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

For example: In a descriptive paragraph about a room in the writer's childhood home, a length of two or three sentences is unlikely to contain enough details to create a picture of the room in the reader's mind, and it will not contribute in conveying the meaning of the place.

In contrast, a half page paragraph, full of carefully selected, vivid, specific details and comparisons provides a fuller impression and engages the reader's interest and imagination.

Descriptive Paragraphs

In descriptive or narrative paragraphs, supporting sentences present details and actions in vivid, specific language in objective or subjective ways, appealing to the readers' senses to make them see and experience the subject.

In addition, in some sentences, writers make comparisons that bring together or substitute the familiar with the unfamiliar, thus enhancing and adding depth to the description of the incident, place, person, or idea.

Persuasive Paragraphs

In a persuasive essay about raising the wage for certified nursing assistants, a paragraph might focus on the expectations and duties of the job, comparing them to that of a registered nurse.

Needless to say, a few sentences that simply list the certified nurse's duties will not give readers a complete enough idea of what these healthcare professionals do. If readers do not have plenty of information about the duties and the writer's experience in performing them for what she considers inadequate pay, the paragraph fails to do its part in convincing readers that the pay is inadequate and should be increased.

Informative or Persuasive Paragraphs

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

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

The type of supporting sentence you choose will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing.

For example, if you are attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position, you should rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions.

Personal testimony in the form of an extended example can be used in conjunction with the other types of support.

Consider the elements in the following paragraph:

Part of the Paragraph	Sentence
Topic Sentence	There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.
Sentence 1 (statistic)	First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle.
Sentence 2 (fact)	Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving.
Sentence 3 (reason)	Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump.
Sentence 4 (example)	Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance.
Sentence 5 (quotation)	"It's the cheapest car I've ever had," she said. "The running costs are far lower than previous gas powered vehicles I've owned."
Concluding Sentence	Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

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

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

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

Original Paragraph:

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

The original paragraph identifies two categories of indecent material, and there is mention of profanity to provide a clue as to what the student thinks is indecent.

However, the paragraph could use some examples to make the idea of inappropriate material clearer. Farheya considered some of the television shows she had seen and made a few changes.

Revised paragraph:

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

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

Consider the paragraph below on a literary topic, based on J. D. Salinger's short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" developed with specific examples from the text. Before Farheya could continue, she needed to first create a working thesis and determine the body paragraph topic:

Part of the Paragraph	Sentence(s)
Thesis	Author J.D. Salinger relied primarily on his personal life and belief system as the foundation for the themes in the majority of his works.
Supporting Point/Topic Sentence	Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced themes in many of his works.
Examples 1 - 3 A title and description of each work are used to establish support for the topic sentence.	Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced the themes in many of his works. He did not hide his mental health issues from his daughter, "You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose, no matter how long you live." His short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" is about a World War II veteran who was recently released from an army hospital for psychiatric problems. The man acts questionably with a little girl he meets on the beach before he commits suicide. Another short story, "For Esme--with Love and Squalor," is narrated by a traumatized soldier who sparks an unusual relationship with a young girl he meets. Finally, In Salinger's only novel, <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> , he continues with the theme of post traumatic stress, though not directly related to war. From a first person narrator, Holden Caulfield narrates the story of his nervous breakdown following the death of his younger brother.

Concluding Sentences



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

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

Topic Sentence	Concluding Sentence
There are many advantages to owning a hybrid car.	Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

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

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

A concluding sentence may do any of the following:

- Restate the main idea.
Example: Childhood obesity is a growing problem in the United States.
- Summarize the key points in the paragraph.
Example: A lack of healthy choices, poor parenting, and an addiction to video games are among the many factors contributing to childhood obesity.
- Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.
Example: These statistics indicate that unless we take action, childhood obesity rates will continue to rise.
- Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.
Example: Based on this research, more than 60 percent of children in the United States will be morbidly obese by the year 2030 unless we take evasive action.
- Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.
Example: Childhood obesity is an entirely preventable tragedy.

Paragraph Length

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

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



1. Identify the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence in the following paragraph.
2. Pair with another student and compare your answers.

The desert provides a harsh environment in which few mammals are able to adapt. Of these hardy creatures, the kangaroo rat is possibly the most fascinating. Able to live in some of the most arid parts of the southwest, the kangaroo rat neither sweats nor pants to keep cool. Its specialized kidneys enable it to survive on a miniscule amount of water. Unlike other desert creatures, the kangaroo rat does not store water in its body but instead is able to convert the dry seeds it eats into moisture. Its ability to adapt to such a hostile environment makes the kangaroo rat a truly amazing creature.

Improving Paragraph Coherence



A strong paragraph holds together well, flowing seamlessly from the topic sentence into the supporting sentences and on to the concluding sentence. To help organize a paragraph and ensure that ideas logically connect to one another, writers use a combination of elements:

1. A clear organizational pattern: chronological (for narrative writing and describing processes), spatial (for descriptions of people or places), order of importance, general to specific (deductive), specific to general (inductive).
2. Transitional words and phrases: These connecting words describe a relationship between ideas.
3. Repetition of ideas: This element helps keep the parts of the paragraph together by maintaining focus on the main idea, so this element reinforces both paragraph coherence and unity.

In the following example, notice the use of transitions (in pink) and key words (in green):

Owning a hybrid car benefits both the owner and the environment. First, these cars get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. "It's the cheapest car I've ever had," she said. "The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I've owned." Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

Words such as "first" and "second" are transition words that show sequence or clarify order. They help organize the writer's ideas by showing that he or she has another point to make in support of the topic sentence. The transition word "because" is a transition word of consequence that continues a line of thought. It indicates that the writer will provide an explanation of a result. In this sentence, the writer explains why hybrid cars will reduce dependency on fossil fuels (because they do not require gas).

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

Summarizing Transitions

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

In conclusion, given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

Although the phrase "in conclusion" certainly reinforces the idea of summary and closure, it is not necessary in this case and seems redundant, as the sentence without the phrase already repeats and summarizes the benefits presented in the topic sentence and flows smoothly from the preceding quotation.

The second half of the sentence, in making a prediction about the future, signals a conclusion, also making the phrase "in conclusion" unnecessary.

The original version of the concluding sentence also illustrates how varying sentences openings can improve paragraph coherence. As writers continue to practice and develop their style, they more easily make these decisions between using standard transitional phrases and combining the repetition of key ideas with varied sentence openings.

The following table provides some useful transition words and phrases to connect sentences within paragraphs as well as to connect:

Table of Common Transitional Words and Phrases

Transition Type	Words
Transitions That Show Sequence or Time	after, before, later, afterward, before long, meanwhile, as soon as, finally, next, at first, first, second, third, soon, at last, in the first place, then
Transitions That Show Position	above, across, at the bottom, at the top, behind, below, beside, beyond, inside, near, next to, opposite, to the left, to the right, to the side, under, where
Transitions That Show a Conclusion	indeed, hence, in conclusion, in the final analysis, therefore, thus
Transitions That Continue a Line of Thought	consequently, furthermore, additionally, because, besides the fact, following this idea, further, in addition, in the same way, moreover, looking further, considering, it is clear that
Transitions That Change a Line of Thought	but, yet, however, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand
Transitions That Show Importance	above all, best, especially, in fact, more important, most important, most, worst
Transitions That Introduce the Final Thoughts in a Paragraph or Essay	finally, last, in conclusion, most of all, least of all, last of all
All-Purpose Transitions to Open Paragraphs or to Connect Ideas Inside Paragraphs	admittedly, at this point, certainly, granted, it is true, generally speaking, in general, in this situation, no doubt, no one denies, obviously, of course, to be sure, undoubtedly, unquestionably
Transitions that Introduce Examples	for instance, for example
Transitions That Clarify the Order of Events or Steps	first, second, third, generally, furthermore, finally, in the first place, also, last, likewise, lastly

Key Takeaways

Writing Paragraphs

- A paragraph contains three distinct components: a topic sentence, body, and concluding sentence.
- The topic sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph.
- Good topic sentences are general enough to cover the supporting sentences and limited enough to be developed well.
- Topic sentences are clear and easy to follow, and provide an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.
- Topic sentences may be explicit or implied. They are usually explicit in informative and persuasive essays, whereas they are often implied in narrative and descriptive writing.
- Topic sentences may be placed at the beginning, middle, or end of a paragraph. In most academic essays, the topic sentence is placed at the beginning of a paragraph.
- Supporting sentences help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence by offering facts, reasons, statistics, quotations, or examples.
- Concluding sentences summarize the key points in a paragraph and reiterate the main idea without repeating it word for word.
- Transitional words and phrases help organize ideas in a paragraph and show how these ideas relate to one another.
- Repetition of keywords helps keep paragraphs focused and coherent.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: The Writing Process

[3.1: Prewriting](#)

[3.2: Outlining](#)

[3.3: Drafting](#)

[3.4: Revising and Editing](#)

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3.1: Prewriting

Overview of Prewriting



Loosely defined, prewriting includes all the writing strategies employed before writing your first draft. Although many more prewriting strategies exist, this section covers the following: using experience and observations, reading, freewriting, asking questions, listing, and clustering/idea mapping. Using the strategies in the following section can help you overcome the fear of the blank page and confidently begin the writing process.

Choosing a Topic

In addition to understanding that writing is a process, writers also understand that choosing a good general topic for an assignment is an essential first step. Sometimes your instructor will give you an idea to begin an assignment, and other times your instructor will ask you to come up with a topic on your own. A good topic not only covers what an assignment will be about, but it also fits the assignment's purpose and its audience.

In the next few sections, you will follow a writer named Mariah as she explores and develops her essay's topic and focus. You will also be planning one of your own. The first important step is for you to tell yourself why you are writing (to inform, to explain, or some other purpose) and for whom you are writing. Write your purpose and your audience on your own sheet of paper, and keep the paper close by as you read and complete exercises in this chapter and write the first draft.

My purpose:

My audience:

Prewriting Techniques: Brainstorming

Brainstorming refers to writing techniques used to:

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

Although brainstorming techniques can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, you will have to find the techniques that are most effective for your writing needs.

The following general strategies can be used when initially deciding on a topic, or for narrowing the focus for a topic:

- Freewriting,
- Asking questions,
- Listing, and
- Clustering/Idea Mapping.

In the initial stage of the writing process, it is fine if you choose a general topic. Later you can use brainstorming strategies to narrow the focus of the topic.

Experience and Observations

When selecting a topic, you may want to consider something that interests you or something based on your own life and personal experiences. Even every-day observations can lead to interesting topics. After writers think about their experiences and observations, they often take notes on paper to better develop their thoughts. These notes help writers discover what they have to say about their topic.

Reading

Reading plays a vital role in all the stages of the writing process, but it first figures in the development of ideas and topics. Different kinds of documents can help you choose and develop a topic. For example, a magazine cover advertising the latest research on the threat of global warming may catch your eye in the supermarket. This subject may interest you, and you may consider global warming as a topic. Or maybe a novel's courtroom drama sparks your curiosity of a particular lawsuit or legal controversy.

After you choose a topic, critical reading is essential to the development of a topic. While reading almost any document, you evaluate the author's point of view by thinking about his main idea and his support. When you judge the author's argument, you discover more about not only the author's opinion but also your own. If this step already seems daunting, remember that even the best writers need to use prewriting strategies to generate ideas.

Prewriting strategies depend on your critical reading skills.

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

Free writing



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

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

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

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

Free Writing Example

Last semester my favorite class was about mass media. We got to study radio and television. People say we watch too much television, and even though I try not to, I end up watching a few reality shows just to relax. Everyone has to relax! It's too hard to relax when something like the news (my husband watches all the time) is on because it's too scary now. Too much bad news, not enough good news. News. Newspapers I don't read as much anymore. I can get the headlines on my homepage when I check my email. Email could be considered mass media too these days. I used to stream movies a few times a week before I started school, but now the only way I know what movies are current is to listen for the Oscar nominations. We have cable but we can't afford movie channels, so I sometimes look at older movies late at night. UGH. A few of them get played again and again until you're sick of them. My husband thinks I'm crazy, but sometimes there are old black-and-whites on from the 1930s and '40s. I could never live my life in black-and-white. I like the home decorating shows and love how people use color on their walls. Makes rooms look so bright. When we buy a home, if we ever can, I'll use lots of color. Some of those shows even show you how to do major renovations by yourself. Knock down walls and everything. Not for me--or my husband. I'm handier than he is. I wonder if they could make a reality show about us?

Exercise: Free Writing



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

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

Asking Questions



Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

In everyday situations, you pose these kinds of questions to get more information.

- Who will be my partner for the project?
- When is the next meeting?
- Why is my car making that odd noise?
- When faced with a writing assignment, you might ask yourself, "How do I begin"?

You seek the answers to these questions to gain knowledge, to better understand your daily experiences, and to plan for the future. Asking these types of questions will also help you with the writing process.

As you choose your topic, answering these questions can help you revisit the ideas you already have and generate new ways to think about your topic. You may also discover aspects of the topic that are unfamiliar to you and that you would like to learn more about. All these idea-gathering techniques will help you plan for future work on your assignment.

When Mariah reread her freewriting notes, she found she had rambled and her thoughts were disjointed. She realized that the topic that interested her most was the one she started with: the media.

She then decided to explore that topic by asking herself questions about it. Her purpose was to refine media into a topic she felt comfortable writing about.

To see how asking questions can help you choose a topic, take a look at the following chart that Mariah completed to record her questions and answers.

She asked herself the questions that reporters and journalists use to gather information for their stories. The questions are often called the 5WH questions, after their initial letters.

Example of Asking Questions

5WH	Answers
Who?	I use media. Students teachers, parents, employers and employees-- almost everyone uses media.
What?	The media can be a lot of things-- television, radio, email (I think), newspapers, magazines, books.
Where?	The media is almost everywhere now. It's at home, at work, in cars, and even on cell phones.
When?	The media has been around for a long time, but it seems a lot more important now.
Why?	Hmm. This is a good question. I don't know why there is mass media. Maybe we have it because we have the technology now. Or people live far away from their families and have to stay in touch.
How?	Well, media is possible because of the technology inventions, but I don't know how they all work.

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How?	Well, media is possible because of the technology inventions, but I don't know how they all work.

Exercise: 5WH



Using the prompt you chose to practice freewriting in EXERCISE 1, continue to explore the topic by answering the 5WH questions, as Mariah does.

Narrowing the focus



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

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

- Listing
- Clustering/Idea Mapping

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

Listing

Listing is a term often applied to describe any prewriting technique writers use to generate ideas on a topic, including freewriting and asking questions. You can make a list on your own or in a group with your classmates. Start with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer screen) and write your general topic across the top. Underneath your topic, make a list of more specific ideas. Think of your general topic as a broad category and the list items as things that fit in that category. Often you will find that one item can lead to the next, creating a flow of ideas that can help you narrow your focus to a more specific paper topic. The following is Mariah's brainstorming list:

Mass Media

Magazines
Newspapers
Podcasting
Radio
Television
Streaming
Gaming/Video Games
Social Media
Smart Phones
Text Message

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

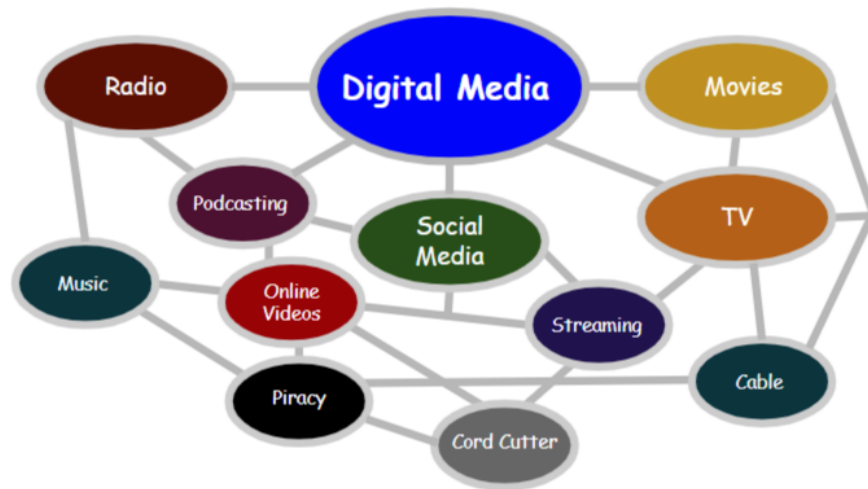
Idea Mapping

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

To create an idea map:

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

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



Notice Mariah's largest circle contains her general topic, digital media. Then, the general topic branches into subtopics written in smaller circles: social media, television, movies and radio. The subtopic television is connected to even more specific topics: cable and streaming. From there, Mariah drew more circles and wrote more specific ideas: cord cutter, piracy, online videos, ad piracy. The radio topic led Mariah to draw connections between music and podcasting, which also connected to online videos and piracy.

From this idea map, Mariah saw she could consider narrowing the focus of her digital media topic to the more specific topic of music piracy.

Topic Checklist: Developing a Good Topic

- Am I interested in this topic
- Would my audience be interested
- Do I have prior knowledge or experience with this topic? If so, would I be comfortable exploring this topic and sharing my experience?
- Do I want to learn more about this topic?
- Is this topic specific?
- Does it fit the length of the assignment?

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

Exercise: Brainstorming and Cluster Mapping



Explore and narrowing your topic by practicing the prewriting techniques of Brainstorming (listing) and Cluster Mapping. Allow yourself no more than five to seven minutes for each technique.

Key Takeaways

Prewriting

- All writers rely on steps and strategies to begin the writing process.
- The steps in the writing process are: prewriting, outlining, writing a rough draft, revising, and editing.
- Remember that the writing process is **recursive**, not linear. You should see the writing process as a series of repeated loops: prewriting, writing, outlining, writing, outlining, revising, writing, editing, writing, revising, editing.
- Writers often choose a general topic first and then narrow the focus to a more specific topic (depending, of course, on assignment or purpose).
- Prewriting includes any brainstorming technique used to generate ideas, narrow the focus of abstract thoughts and ideas, and transfer them into written form.
- A good topic interests the writer, appeals to the audience, and fits the purpose of the writing project.

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3.2: Outlining

Outlining



Purpose of an Outline

Creating an outline is an important step in the writing process!

Once your topic has been chosen, your ideas have been generated through brainstorming techniques, and you've developed a working thesis, the next step in the prewriting stage is to create an outline. Sometimes called a "blueprint," or "plan" "map" for your paper, an outline helps writers organize their thoughts and categorize the main points they wish to make in an order that makes sense.

The purpose of an outline is to help you organize your paper by checking to see if and how your ideas connect to each other, or whether you need to flesh out a point or two. No matter the length of the paper, from a three-page weekly assignment to a 50-page senior thesis, outlines can help you see the overall picture.

Having an outline also helps prevent writers from "getting stuck" when writing the first drafts of an essay.

A well-developed outline should show the essential elements of an essay:

- thesis of essay
- main idea of each body paragraph
- evidence/support offered in each paragraph to substantiate the main points.?

A well-developed outline breaks down the parts of your thesis in a clear, hierarchical manner. Writing an outline before beginning an essay can help writers organize ideas generated through brainstorming and/or research. You can also do a "reverse" outline if you need to write a draft before outlining.

In short, a well-developed outline makes your paper easier to write by having a clear plan set out in advance.

The formatting of any outline is not arbitrary; the system of formatting and number/letter designations creates a visual hierarchy of the ideas, or points, being made in the essay.

Major points, in other words, should not be buried in subtopic levels.

Types of Outlines

Alphanumeric Outlines

This is the most common type of outline used and is usually instantly recognizable to most people. The formatting follows these characters, in this order:

Level 1: Main Points Roman Numerals (I, II, III, IV, V, etc.)

Level 2: Support Capitalized Letters (A, B, C, D, E, etc.)

Level 3: Sub-points for Support Arabic Numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.)

Level 4: Additional Supporting Details Lowercase Letters (a, b, c, d, e, etc.)

Alphanumeric Outline Example

- I. (Main point) Lowering the speed limit to 55 mph on Interstate highways is a cost effective way to reduce pollution and greenhouse gases
 - A. (Supporting detail) Gas mileage significantly decreases at speeds over 55 mph
 - 1. (Supporting detail for sub-point) Slowing down from 65 mph to 55 mph can increase MPG by as much as 15 percent
 - a. (Additional explanation/support for supporting detail) Each 5 mph driven over 60 mph is like paying an additional \$0.21 per gallon for gas (at \$3.00 per gallon).

If the outline needs to subdivide beyond these divisions, use Arabic numerals inside parentheses and then lowercase letters inside parentheses.

Full Sentence Outlines

The formatting for a full sentence outline is essentially the same as the Alphanumeric outline. The main difference (as the title suggests) is that full sentences are required at each level of the outline. This outline is most often used when preparing a traditional essay.

Full-Sentence Example

- I. Lowering the speed limit on Interstate highways to 55 mph would create a significant, cost-free reduction in air pollution.
 - A. (Supporting detail) Gas consumption significantly increases at speeds over 55 mph.
 - 1. (Supporting detail for sub-point) Slowing down from 65 mph to 55 mph can increase your car's MPG by as much as 15 percent, and thereby eliminate 15 percent of carbon emissions.
 - a. (Additional explanation/support for supporting detail) According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), as a rule of thumb, each 5 mph driven over 60 mph is like paying an additional \$0.21 per gallon for gas (at \$3.00 per gallon).

"Reverse" Outline

A "reverse" outline is a useful tool for those writers who need to write a draft before they outline--they need to see where their brain went during the writing process. Sometimes, trying to write an outline **before** a draft can lead to writers feeling stuck or blocked. If this is true for you, write a "messy" draft (where your writing is slightly more organized than the freewriting / prewriting). Then write an outline listing the topic sentences or main ideas from each paragraph in the order that you wrote them. This helps you see where your brain went, like using an app to track a random running route. On a new sheet of paper or new document, plan your new map / route: where *should* your brain have gone? Which paragraphs work better together now that you've visualized them this way?

Creating an Outline

1. **Identify your topic:** Put the topic in your own words in with a single sentence or phrase to help you stay on topic.
2. **Determine your main points:** What are the main points you want to make to convince your audience? Refer back to the prewriting/brainstorming exercise of answering 5WH questions: "why or how is the main topic important?" Using your brainstorming notes, you should be able to create a working thesis.
3. **List your main points/ideas in a logical order:** You can always change the order later as you evaluate your outline.
4. **Create sub-points for each major idea:** Typically, each time you have a new number or letter, there need to be at least two points (i.e. if you have an A, you need a B; if you have a 1, you need a 2; etc.). Though perhaps frustrating at first, it is indeed useful because it forces you to think hard about each point; if you can't create two points, then reconsider including the first in your paper, as it may be extraneous information that may detract from your argument.

5. **Evaluate:** Review your organizational plan, your blueprint for your paper. Does each paragraph have a controlling idea/topic sentence? Is each point adequately supported? Look over what you have written. Does it make logical sense? Is each point suitably fleshed out? Is there anything included that is unnecessary?
6. **Overview:** View the YouTube video on Outlining from the University of North Carolina's Online Writing Lab (you may have to copy and paste the link into a new tab): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZUrIFY84Kw>

Exercise: Create a sentence outline from the following introductory paragraph in alphanumeric format:



The popularity of knitting is cyclical, rising and falling according to the prevailing opinion of women's places in society. Though internationally a unisex hobby, knitting is pervasively thought of as a woman's hobby in the United States. Knitting is currently enjoying a boost in popularity as traditionally minded women pick up the craft while women who enjoy subverting traditional gender roles have also picked up the needles to reclaim the lost domestic arts and give traditionally feminine crafts the proper respect. American men are also picking up the needles in greater numbers, with men's knitting guilds and retreats nationwide. This rise in popularity has made the receiving of hand-knit items special, and many people enjoy receiving these long-lasting, painstakingly crafted items. For any knitters, the perfect gift starts by choosing the perfect yarn. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the preferences of the person for whom the project is being made, the availability of the yarn, and the type of yarn recommended by the pattern.

What is the thesis? How is the topic introduced? Is there a hierarchy of supporting points?

Sample of 3-Level Alphanumeric Outline



Outline

Thesis: Making the perfect egg omelet requires proper preparation and skillful cooking technique.

- I. Making the perfect egg omelet requires proper preparation.
 - A. The cook must have adequate utensils.
 - 1. A heavy, Teflon-coated frying pan gives even heat and prevents burning.
 - 2. A plastic spatula prevents the cook from scratching the frying pan.
 - B. The cook must select fresh ingredients.
 - 1. Fresh eggs make a fluffier omelet than eggs that have aged.
 - 2. Sweet milk blends into the egg batter more evenly than sour milk.
 - 3. Fresh vegetable oil is necessary to avoid giving the omelet a greasy flavor and texture.
 - 4. Newly cracked pepper and sea salt add extra zest to the egg batter.
- II. Making the perfect egg omelet requires skillful cooking techniques.
 - A. The cook must prepare the egg batter quickly.
 - 1. The eggs must be beaten with a whisk until they are fluffy.
 - 2. The milk and seasonings must be whisked into the egg batter before the eggs go flat.
 - B. The cook must fry the egg batter with care.
 - 1. The egg batter must be poured into the frying pan as soon as the oil is hot.
 - 2. The omelet must be turned in the pan only once as soon as the batter sets on top.

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3.3: Drafting

Drafting



The Importance of Drafting

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

You have prewriting and planning already done, so you know what will go on that blank page: what you wrote in your outline.

Goals and Strategies for Drafting

Your objective at this stage of the writing process is to draft an essay with at least three body paragraphs, which means that the essay will contain a minimum of five paragraphs, including an introduction and a conclusion. A draft is a complete version of a piece of writing, but it is not the final version. The step in the writing process after drafting, as you may remember, is revising.

During revision, you will have the opportunity to make changes to your first draft before you put the finishing touches on it during the editing and proofreading stage. A first draft gives you a working version that you can later improve.

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

In this lesson, Mariah does all her work on the computer, but you may use pen and paper or the computer to write a rough draft.

Making the Writing Process Work for You

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

- **Begin writing with the part you know the most about.** You can start with the third paragraph in your outline if ideas come easily to mind. You can start with the second paragraph or the first paragraph, too. Although paragraphs may vary in length, keep in mind that short paragraphs may contain insufficient support. Readers may also think the writing is abrupt. Long paragraphs may be wordy and may lose your reader's interest. As a guideline, try to write paragraphs longer than one sentence but shorter than the length of an entire double-spaced page.
- **Write one paragraph at a time and then stop.** As long as you complete the assignment on time, you may choose how many paragraphs you complete in one sitting. Pace yourself. On the other hand, try not to procrastinate. Writers should always meet their deadlines.
- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind.** This tip might be most useful if you are writing a multipage report or essay. Still, if you are antsy or cannot concentrate, take a break to let your mind rest. But do not let breaks extend too long. If you spend too

much time away from your essay, you may have trouble starting again. You may forget key points or lose momentum. Try setting an alarm to limit your break, and when the time is up, return to your desk to write.

- **Be reasonable with your goals.** If you decide to take ten-minute breaks, try to stick to that goal. If you told yourself that you need more facts, then commit to finding them. Holding yourself to your own goals will create successful writing assignments.
- **Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write.** These aspects of writing are just as important when you are writing a single paragraph for your essay as when you are considering the direction of the entire essay.

Of all of these considerations, keeping your purpose and your audience at the front of your mind is the most important key to writing success. If your purpose is to persuade, for example, you will present your facts and details in the most logical and convincing way you can. Your purpose will guide your mind as you compose your sentences.

Your audience will guide word choice. Are you writing for experts, for a general audience, for other college students, or for people who know very little about your topic? Keep asking yourself what your readers, with their background and experience, need to be told in order to understand your ideas. How can you best express your ideas so they are totally clear and your communication is effective?

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

Exercise: Identify Purpose and Audience



Using the topic for the essay that you have outlined, describe your purpose and your audience as specifically as you can.

Use your own sheet of paper to record your responses. Then keep these responses near you during future stages of the writing process.

Purpose: _____

Audience: _____

Discovering the Basic Elements of a First Draft



Step by Step

If you have been using the information in the previous chapters step by step to help you develop an assignment, you already have both a formal topic outline and a formal sentence outline to direct your writing. Knowing what a first draft looks like will help you make the creative leap from the outline to the first draft.

A first draft should include the following elements:

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

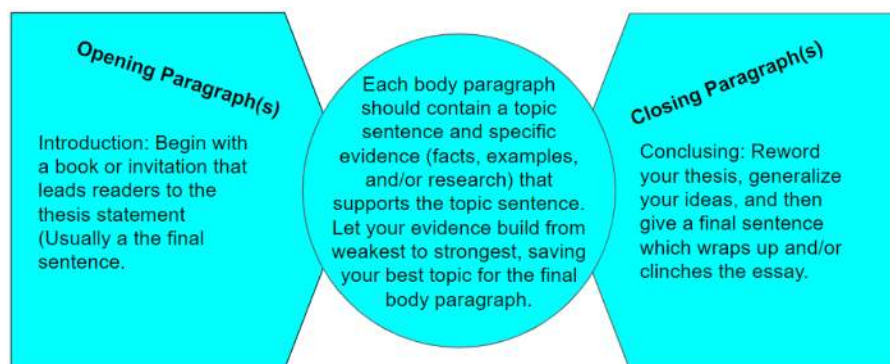
The Bowtie Method

There are many ways to think about the writing process as a whole. One way to imagine your essay is to see it like a bowtie.

In the figure below, you will find a visual representation of this metaphor. The left side of the bow is the introduction, which begins with a hook and ends with the thesis statement.

In the center, you will find the body paragraphs, which grow with strength as the paper progresses, and each paragraph contains a supported topic sentence.

On the right side, you will find the conclusion. Your conclusion should reword your thesis and then wrap up the paper with a summation, clinch, or challenge. In the end, your paper should present itself as a neat package, like a bowtie.



Starting Your First Draft



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

The following is Mariah's thesis statement:

E-book readers are changing the way people read.

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

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

Purpose: My purpose is to inform readers about the wide variety of consumer digital technology available in stores and to explain why the specifications for these products, expressed in numbers that average consumer don't understand, often cause bad or misinformed buying decisions.

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

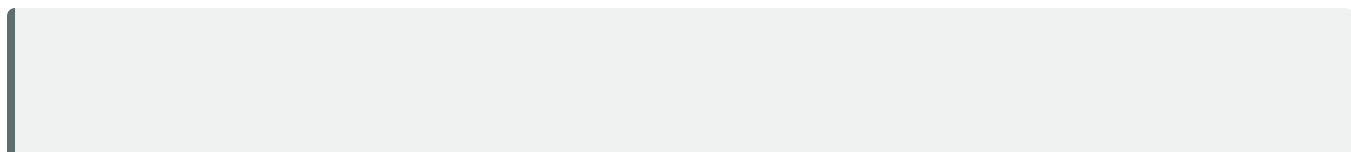
Mariah chose to begin by writing a quick introduction based on her thesis statement. She knew that she would want to improve her introduction significantly when she revised.

Right now, she just wanted to give herself a starting point. Remember that she could have started directly with any of the body paragraphs. You will learn more about writing attention-getting introductions and effective conclusions later in this chapter.

Outlining

With her thesis statement and her purpose and audience notes in front of her, Mariah then looked at her sentence outline. She chose to use that outline because it includes the topic sentences.

The following is the portion of her outline for the first body paragraph. The Roman numeral I identifies the topic sentence for the paragraph, capital letters indicate supporting details, and Arabic numerals label sub-points.



 Note

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

Expanding to Paragraphs

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

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

Organizing Your Work

If you write your first draft on the computer, consider creating a new file folder for each course with a set of subfolders inside the course folders for each assignment you are given.

Label the folders clearly with the course names, and label each assignment folder and word processing document with a title that you will easily recognize. The assignment name is a good choice for the document. Then use that subfolder to store all the drafts you create.

When you start each new draft, do not just write over the last one. Instead, save the draft with a new tag after the title: draft 1, draft 2, and so on, so that you will have a complete history of drafts in case your instructor wishes you to submit them.

In your draft documents, observe any formatting requirements for margins, headers, placement of page numbers, and other layout matters that your instructor requires.

Exercise: Outlining



Following how Mariah made her sentence outline for her first draft, make an outline of your own paper. Mariah organized the outline in the following way:

Roman numeral I identifies the topic sentence for the paragraph, capital letters indicate supporting details, and Arabic numerals label sub-points.

Use the template below to create your own outline. Create at least three supporting details with at least two sub-points for each supporting details.

- I. Identify your topic sentence.
 - A. First supporting detail for topic sentence.
 - 1. Sub-point following supporting detail.
 - 2. Sub-point following supporting detail.
 - B. Second supporting detail for topic sentence.
 - 1. Sub-point following supporting detail.
 - 2. Sub-point following supporting detail.
 - C. Third supporting detail for topic sentence.
 - 1. Sub-point following supporting detail.
 - 2. Sub-point following supporting detail.

Continuing the First Draft



Parking Downhill

Mariah continued writing her essay, moving to the second and third body paragraphs. She had to stop writing her essay draft to finish some other work she needed to get done. So, she didn't return to writing her essay for a few days.

Mariah could have planned for this break by doing something called "Parking Downhill." This means that you set yourself up to continue writing by creating momentum for yourself when you return. Instead of just stopping, jot down some quick notes about what you will write next.

Here's how you do it:

- write what you did,
- any problems you are encountering,
- any questions you might have,
- what will be the first thing you will do when you sit down to continue writing.

The Reading-Writing Connection

Even if you have prepared yourself, do not start writing immediately when you return to your work. Put yourself back in context and in the mood by rereading what you have already written.

You may find that as you reread, you get more ideas and start to make edits to the writing as you read.

Writing a Title



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

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

Sometimes a title is not easy to come up with, but it is essential to a good essay to have a good title. Avoid restating the assignment, or simply repeating your thesis statement. Find a title that is engaging, original, and will prepare the reader for your essay.

It is not necessary to come up with a perfect title right away. Sometimes, it is easier to find a "working title": a title that works for now. Later you can come up with something even better.

Thesis Statement:

eBook readers are changing the way people read.

Working Title:

Reading: Are Books and eBooks the Same?

Drafting Body Paragraphs



If your introduction gives the reader a roadmap to your essay, then body paragraphs should closely follow that map. The reader should be able to predict what follows your introductory paragraph by simply reading the thesis statement. The body paragraphs present the evidence you have gathered to confirm your thesis.

Before you begin to support your thesis in the body, you must find information from a variety of sources (or the source provided by your professor) that support and give credit to what you are trying to prove.

Select Primary Support for Your Thesis

Without primary support, your argument is not likely to be convincing. Primary support can be described as the major points you choose to expand on your thesis. It is the most important information you select to argue for your point of view. Each point you choose will be incorporated into the topic sentence for each body paragraph you write. Your primary supporting points are further supported by supporting details within the paragraphs.

Remember that a worthy argument is backed by examples. In order to construct a valid argument, good writers conduct lots of background research and take careful notes. They also talk to people knowledgeable about a topic in order to understand its implications before writing about it. For guidance on incorporating research into your paragraphs, see the section "Using Sources."

Primary Support



Identify the Characteristics of Good Primary Support

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

Be relevant to the thesis.

Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may think you need to include it all in your body paragraphs. But effective writers resist the temptation to lose focus. Choose your supporting points wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.

Be specific.

The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be more specific than the thesis. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. These types of examples give your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, while they convey the necessary information, are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.

Be detailed.

Remember that your thesis, while specific, should not be very detailed. The body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

Pre-write to Identify Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

Recall that when you pre-write you essentially make a list of examples or reasons why you support your stance. Stemming from each point, you further provide details to support those reasons. After prewriting, you are then able to look back at the information and choose the most compelling pieces you will use in your body paragraphs.

Select the Most Effective Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

As you developed a working thesis through prewriting techniques, you may have generated a lot of information, which may be edited out later. Remember that your primary support must be relevant to your thesis. Remind yourself of your main argument, and delete any ideas that do not directly relate to it. Omitting unrelated ideas ensures that you will use only the most convincing information in your body paragraphs. Choose at least three of only the most compelling points. These will serve as the topic sentences for your body paragraphs.

When you support your thesis, you are revealing evidence. Evidence includes anything that can help support your stance. The following are the kinds of evidence you will encounter as you conduct your research:

1. **Facts:** Facts are the best kind of evidence to use because they often cannot be disputed. They can support your stance by providing background information on or a solid foundation for your point of view. However, some facts may still need explanation. For example, the sentence "The most populated state in the United States is California" is a pure fact, but it may require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument.
2. **Judgments:** Judgments are conclusions drawn from the given facts. Judgments are more credible than opinions because they are founded upon careful reasoning and examination of a topic.
3. **Testimony:** Testimony consists of direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness. An eyewitness is someone who has direct experience with a subject; he adds authenticity to an argument based on facts. An expert witness is a person who has extensive experience with a topic. This person studies the facts and provides commentary based on either facts or judgments, or both. An expert witness adds authority and credibility to an argument.
4. **Personal observation.** Personal observation is similar to testimony, but personal observation consists of your testimony. It reflects what you know to be true because you have experiences and have formed either opinions or judgments about them. For instance, if you are one of five children and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child's social development, you could use your own experience to support your thesis.

You can consult a vast pool of resources to gather support for your stance. Citing relevant information from reliable sources ensures that your reader will take you seriously and consider your assertions.

Use any of the following sources for your essay:

- newspapers or news organization websites,

- magazines,
- encyclopedias, and
- scholarly journals (which are periodicals that address topics in a specialized field).

When using sources, you are responsible for properly documenting the borrowed information properly. Refer to the section "Using Sources" (1.3) for more information.

Choose Supporting Topic Sentences

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

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

As you read in "Writing Paragraphs," topic sentences indicate the location and main points of the basic arguments of your essay. These sentences are vital to writing your body paragraphs because they always refer back to and support your thesis statement.

Topic sentences are linked to the ideas you have introduced in your thesis, thus reminding readers what your essay is about. A paragraph without a clearly identified topic sentence may be unclear and scattered, just like an essay without a thesis statement.

Consider the following example of a thesis statement:

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

The following topic sentence is a primary supporting point for the thesis. The topic sentence states exactly what the controlling idea of the paragraph is.

Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced themes in many of his works.

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

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

The Five Paragraph Essay

Unless your professor instructs otherwise, you should include at least three body paragraphs in your essay. A five-paragraph essay, including the introduction and conclusion, is commonly the standard for essay exams, but you shouldn't depend on that as a viable structure for writing in college.

Most of your essays will be significantly longer than five paragraphs. Writers should maintain flexibility and not expect all essays to conform to that model. The emphasis is on creating an essay that provides enough support to tell a story, create an image or idea, or inform or persuade the audience.

All essays you write in college have a beginning (introduction), middle (body), and end (conclusion). But how those will be formatted and how long they'll be will change from class to class, and you need to be flexible and adaptable. Take the skills you

learned writing one essay and adapt them to the next essay, without assuming that all essays will look alike.

Use an Outline to Draft Supporting Detail Sentences for Each Primary Support Sentence

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

Thesis: Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.

- I. Dogs can scare cyclists.
 - A. Cyclists are forced to zigzag on the roads.
 - B. School children panic and turn wildly on their bikes.
 - C. People walking at night freeze in fear.
- II. Loose dogs are traffic hazards.
 - A. Dogs in the street make people swerve their cars.
 - B. To avoid dogs, drivers run into other cars or pedestrians.
 - C. Children coaxing dogs across city streets create danger.
- III. Unleashed dogs damage gardens.
 - A. They step on flowers and vegetables.
 - B. They destroy hedges by urinating on them.
 - C. They mess up lawns by digging holes.

You have the option of writing your topic sentences in one of three ways:

- you can state it at the beginning of the body paragraph, or
- at the end of the paragraph, or
- you do not have to write it at all. (This is called an implied topic sentence.)

An implied topic sentence lets readers form the main idea for themselves. For beginning writers, it is best to not use implied topic sentences because it makes it harder to focus your writing. Your instructor may also want to clearly identify the sentences that support your thesis.

Key Takeaways

- Your body paragraphs should closely follow the path set forth by your thesis statement.
- Strong body paragraphs contain evidence that supports your thesis.
- Primary support comprises the most important points you use to support your thesis.
- Strong primary support is specific, detailed, and relevant to the thesis.
- Prewriting helps you determine your most compelling primary support.
- Evidence includes facts, judgments, testimony, and personal observation.
- Reliable sources may include newspapers, magazines, academic journals, books, encyclopedias, and firsthand testimony.
- A topic sentence presents one point of your thesis statement while the information in the rest of the paragraph supports that point.
- A body paragraph comprises a topic sentence plus supporting details.

Exercise: Topic Sentences



Print out the first draft of your essay and use a highlighter to mark your topic sentences in the body paragraphs.

Make sure the topic sentences are clearly stated and accurately present your paragraphs, as well as accurately reflect your thesis.

If your topic sentence contains information that does not exist in the rest of the paragraph, rewrite it to more accurately match the rest of the paragraph.

Exercise: Supporting A Thesis



This is a multi-step exercise. Your instructor may want you to do all or part of this exercise.

Step 1: Choose a Thesis Statement

Choose one of the following working thesis statements.

On a separate sheet of paper, freewrite for at least five minutes on ONE of the topics.

1. Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.
2. Students cheat for many different reasons.
3. Drug use among teens and young adults is a problem.
4. The most important change that should occur at my college or university is . . .

Step 2: Support the Thesis

Select three of your most compelling reasons to support the thesis statement you chose.

Remember that the points you choose must be specific and relevant to the thesis. The statements you choose will be your primary support points. You will later incorporate them into the topic sentences for body paragraphs.

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

Step 3: Convert Support to Topic Sentences

You chose three of your most convincing points to support the thesis statement you selected from the list. Take each point and incorporate it into a topic sentence for three body paragraphs.

Supporting point 1: _____

Topic sentence 1: _____

Supporting point 2: _____

Topic sentence 2: _____

Supporting point 3: _____

Topic sentence 3: _____

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

Step 4: Draft Supporting Details

Using the three topic sentences you composed, draft at least three supporting details for each point.

Thesis Statement: _____

Topic Sentence 1: _____

Supporting Detail 1: _____

Supporting Detail 2: _____

Supporting Detail 3: _____

Topic Sentence 2: _____

Supporting Detail 1: _____

Supporting Detail 2: _____

Supporting Detail 3: _____

Topic Sentence 3: _____

Supporting Detail 1: _____

Supporting Detail 2: _____

Supporting Detail 3: _____

Drafting Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs



Picture your introduction as a storefront window: You have a certain amount of space to attract your customers (readers) to your goods (subject) and bring them inside your store (discussion).

Once you have enticed them with something intriguing, you then point them in a specific direction and try to make the sale (convince them to accept your thesis). Your introduction is an invitation to your readers to consider what you have to say and then to follow your train of thought as you expand upon your thesis statement.

Writing an Introduction

Too many students think that when they start writing a paper, they need to start with the introduction, and they get stuck. They know that introductions are important, but often they're unable to articulate why.

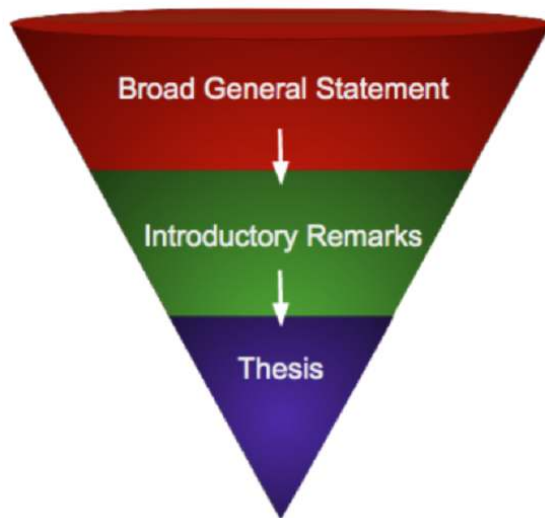
Why? The introduction is for the reader: it helps them understand what to expect in the rest of the paper. But you, as the writer, often don't know where you're going when you start a paper (especially if you need to write a messy draft before writing an outline), so it's better to just start writing. If you think about an introduction as a road map to the rest of the paper, you can't write a map to the coffee shop unless you've been there yourself. When to write an introduction: LATER, after you've written a messy draft!

An introduction serves the following purposes:

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

First impressions are crucial and can leave lasting effects in your reader's mind, which is why the introduction is so important to your essay. If your introductory paragraph is dull or disjointed, your reader probably will not have much interest in continuing with the essay. Think of your introduction as a road map that helps your reader understand where they're going.

Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph



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

Immediately capturing your readers' interest increases the chances of having them read what you are about to discuss. You can garner curiosity for your essay in a number of ways.

Try to get your readers personally involved by doing any of the following:

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

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

Writing a Conclusion

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

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

The Anatomy of a Strong Conclusion

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

The construction of the conclusion is similar to the introduction, in which you make general introductory statements and then present your thesis. The difference is that in the conclusion you first paraphrase, or state in different words, your thesis and then follow up with general concluding remarks. If you find that repetitive, consider posing a question to your reader, or bringing in an idea or text that you didn't think fit into the body of the essay.

The conclusion should progressively broaden the focus of your thesis and maneuver your readers out of the essay. Many writers like to end their essays with a final emphatic statement. This strong closing statement will cause your readers to continue thinking about the implications of your essay; it will make your conclusion, and thus your essay, more memorable.

Another powerful technique is to challenge your readers to make a change in either their thoughts or their actions. Challenging your readers to see the subject through new eyes is a powerful way to ease yourself and your readers out of the essay.

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

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

1. **Introducing significant new material:** Introducing important new material in your conclusion has an unsettling effect on your reader. When you raise new points, you make your reader want more information, which you could not possibly provide in the limited space of your final paragraph. Always be sure to check with your teacher about whether information is significant enough to go in the body of the paper, rather than in the conclusion. Something related but not as relevant to the main point could work.
2. **Contradicting your thesis:** Contradicting or changing your thesis statement causes your readers to think that you do not actually have a conviction about your topic. After all, you have spent several paragraphs adhering to a specific point of view.
3. **Changing your thesis:** When you change sides or open up your point of view in the conclusion, your reader becomes less inclined to believe your original argument.
4. **Using apologies or disclaimers:** By apologizing for your opinion or stating that you know it is tough to digest, you are in fact admitting that even you know what you have discussed is irrelevant or unconvincing. You do not want your readers to feel this way. Effective writers stand by their thesis statement and do not stray from it.

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

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3.4: Revising and Editing

Revising and Editing



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

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

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

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

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

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

Many people hear the words "critic," "critical," and "criticism" and pick up only negative vibes that provoke feelings that make them blush, grumble, or shout. However, as a writer and a thinker, you need to learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way and have high expectations for your work.

You also need to train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. For this, you need to teach yourself where to look. Having a critical eye means having the ability to look at how something works (and whether it could work better) without getting emotional or attached to the object of that critical examination. Cultivating the skill of objective criticism will serve you well as a writer and student.

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

Completing a Peer Review



After working so closely with a piece of writing, writers often need to step back and ask for a more objective reader. What writers most need is feedback from readers who can respond only to the words on the page. When they are ready, writers show their drafts to someone they respect and who can give an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses. Often, professors will set this up using specific worksheets or peer review directions that they have developed for each assignment. Follow those directions closely.

You, too, can ask a peer to read your draft when it is ready. After evaluating the feedback and assessing what is most helpful, the reader's feedback will help you when you revise your draft. This process is called "peer review."

You can work with a partner in your class and identify specific ways to strengthen each others essays. Although you may be uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, remember that each writer is working toward the same goal: a final draft that fits the audience and the purpose. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease.

The box that follows provides a useful framework for the peer review session, if you aren't given specific directions from a professor:

Questions for Peer Review

Title of essay:

Date:

Writer's name:

Peer reviewer's name:

1. This essay is about . . .

2. Your main points in this essay are:

3. What I most liked about this essay:

4. These three points struck me as your strongest:

a. Point:

Why:

b. Point:

Why:

c. Point:

Why:

These places in your essay are not clear to me:

a. Where:

Needs improvement because:

b. Where:

Needs improvement because

c. Where:

Needs improvement because

The one additional change you could make that would improve this essay significantly is:

Exercise: Peer Review



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

Use the following questions to direct your peer review:

Questions for Peer Review

Title of essay:

Date:

Writer's name:

Peer reviewer's name:

1. This essay is about . . .

2. Your main points in this essay are:

3. What I most liked about this essay:

4. These three points struck me as your strongest:

a. Point:

Why:

b. Point:

Why:

c. Point:

Why:

These places in your essay are not clear to me:

a. Where:

Needs improvement because:

b. Where:

Needs improvement because

c. Where:

Needs improvement because

The one additional change you could make that would improve this essay significantly is:

Using Feedback



Using Feedback Objectively

The purpose of peer feedback is to receive constructive criticism of your essay. Your peer reviewer is your first real audience, and you have the opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so that you can improve your work before sharing the final draft with a wider audience (or your intended audience).

It may not be necessary to incorporate every recommendation your peer reviewer makes. However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to take that feedback into consideration in future assignments. For example, if you read consistent comments about a need for more research, then you may want to consider including more research in future assignments.

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

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

1. Does the feedback support the purpose of the assignment?
2. Does the feedback suggest revisions that are appropriate to the audience?

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

Creating Unity and Coherence



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

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

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

Creating Unity

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

Mariah's Essay

Mariah stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of her essay she tentatively titled "Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?" But a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset her enough that she digressed from the main topic of her third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store she visited. When

she revised her essay, she deleted the off-topic sentences that affected the unity of her essay. Compare the following paragraphs to see how Mariah's changes helped maintain unity.

Original Paragraph	Edited Paragraph
<i>Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and stream on. You could listen to the guys in the electronics store, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell you what they have in stock, not what best fits your needs. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky televisions.</i>	<i>Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and stream on. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky televisions.</i>

Transitions, Wordiness, and Clarity



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

Table of Common Transitional Words and Phrases

Transition Type	Words
Transitions That Show Sequence or Time	after, before, later, afterward, before long, meanwhile, as soon as, finally, next, at first, first, second, third, soon, at last, in the first place, then
Transitions That Show Position	above, across, at the bottom, at the top, behind, below, beside, beyond, inside, near, next to, opposite, to the left, to the right, to the side, under, where
Transitions That Show a Conclusion	indeed, hence, in conclusion, in the final analysis, therefore, thus
Transitions That Continue a Line of Thought	consequently, furthermore, additionally, because, besides the fact, following this idea, further, in addition, in the same way, moreover, looking further, considering, it is clear that
Transitions That Change a Line of Thought	but, yet, however, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand
Transitions That Show Importance	above all, best, especially, in fact, more important, most important, most, worst
Transitions That Introduce the Final Thoughts in a Paragraph or Essay	finally, last, in conclusion, most of all, least of all, last of all
All-Purpose Transitions to Open Paragraphs or to Connect Ideas Inside Paragraphs	admittedly, at this point, certainly, granted, it is true, generally speaking, in general, in this situation, no doubt, no one denies, obviously, of course, to be sure, undoubtedly, unquestionably
Transitions that Introduce Examples	for instance, for example
Transitions That Clarify the Order of Events or Steps	first, second, third, generally, furthermore, finally, in the first place, also, last, likewise, lastly

Mariah's Essay

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

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

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

Being Clear and Concise

Some writers are very methodical and painstaking when they write a first draft. Other writers unleash a lot of words in order to get out all that they feel they need to say. Do either of these composing styles match your style? Or is your composing style somewhere in between? No matter which description best fits you, the first draft of almost every piece of writing, no matter its author, can be

made clearer and more concise. If you have a tendency to write too much, you will need to look for unnecessary words. If you have a tendency to be vague or imprecise in your wording, you will need to find specific words to replace any overly general language.

Identifying Wordiness

Sometimes writers use too many words when fewer words will appeal more to their audience and better fit their purpose.

Here are some common examples of wordiness to look for in your draft. Eliminating wordiness helps all readers, because it makes your ideas clear, direct, and straightforward.

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

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

Revised: The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.

- **Wordy:** Two extremely famous and well-known consumer advocates spoke eloquently in favor of the proposed important legislation.

Revised: Two well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the proposed legislation.

- **Sentences with deadwood phrases that add little to the meaning.** Be judicious when you use phrases such as "in terms of," "with a mind to," "on the subject of," "as to whether or not," more or less," "as far as ___ is concerned," and similar expressions. You can usually find a more straightforward way to state your point.

Wordy: As a world leader in the field of green technology, the company plans to focus its efforts in the area of geothermal energy. A report as to whether or not to use geysers as an energy source is in the process of preparation.

Revised: As a world leader in green technology, the company plans to focus on geothermal energy. A report about using geysers as an energy source is in preparation.

- **Sentences in the passive voice or with forms of the verb "to be."** Sentences with passive-voice verbs often create confusion, because the subject of the sentence does not perform an action. Sentences are clearer when the subject of the sentence performs the action and is followed by a strong verb. Use strong active-voice verbs in place of forms of "to be," which can lead to wordiness. Avoid passive voice when you can.

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

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

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

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

Exercise: Clarity in Writing



Class Discussion

After reading Mariah's revised paragraph:

1. Do you agree with the transitions and other changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain.
2. What transition words or phrases did Mariah add to her paragraph? Why did she choose each one?
3. What effect does adding additional sentences have on the coherence of the paragraph? Explain. When you read both versions aloud, which version has a more logical flow of ideas? Explain.

Revise your Essay

Now return to the first draft of the essay you wrote.

- Revise it for coherence.
- Add transition words and phrases where they are needed, and
- make any other changes that are needed to improve the flow and connection between ideas.
- Check it for unnecessary words. Try making your sentences as concise as they can be. Choose specific, appropriate Words

Tone



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

- Avoid slang. Find alternatives to "bummer," "kewl," and "rad."

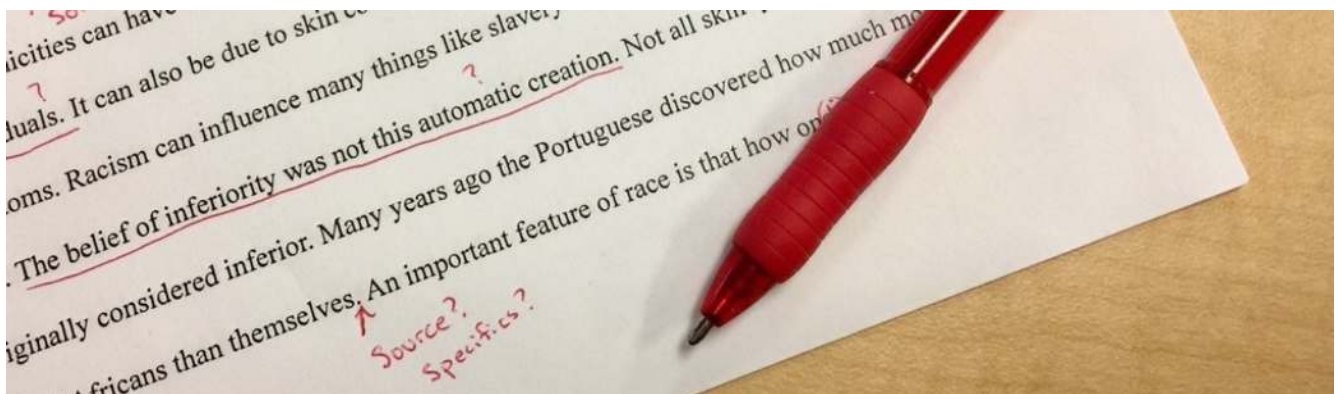
- **Avoid language that is overly casual.** Write about "men and women" rather than "girls and guys" unless you are trying to create a specific effect. A formal tone calls for formal language.
- **Avoid contractions.** Use "do not" in place of "don't," "I am" in place of "I'm," "have not" in place of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

Mariah's Essay

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

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

Editing Your Draft



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

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

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

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

Chapter 5 offers a useful review of grammar, mechanics, and usage. Use it to help you eliminate major errors in your writing and refine your understanding of the conventions of language.

Do not hesitate to ask for help, too, from peer tutors in your academic department or in the college's writing lab. In the meantime, use the following checklists to help you edit your writing.

Checklists for Editing Your Writing

Grammar

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

Sentence Structure

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

Punctuation

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

Mechanics and Usage

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



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

Proofreading

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

Formatting

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



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

Key Takeaways

- Revising and editing are the stages of the writing process in which you improve your work before producing a final draft.
- During revising, you add, cut, move, or change information in order to improve content.
- During editing, you take a second look at the words and sentences you used to express your ideas and fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.
- Unity in writing means that all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong together and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense
- Coherence in writing means that the writer's wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and between paragraphs
- Transitional words and phrases effectively make writing more coherent
- Writing should be clear and concise, with no unnecessary words.
- Effective formal writing uses specific, appropriate words and avoids slang, contractions, cliches, and overly general words.
- Peer reviews, done properly, can give writers objective feedback about their writing. It is the writer's responsibility to evaluate the results of peer reviews and incorporate only useful feedback.
- Remember to budget time for careful editing and proofreading. Use all available resources, including editing checklists, peer editing, and your institution's writing lab, to improve your editing skills.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Rhetorical Modes of Writing

4.1: Rhetorical Modes of Writing

4.2: Description

4.3: Classification

4.4: Process Essay

4.5: Definition

4.6: Comparison and Contrast

4.7: Cause and Effect

4.8: Persuasion

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4.1: Rhetorical Modes of Writing

Narration



The Purpose of Narrative Writing

Narration means the art of storytelling, and the purpose of narrative writing is to tell stories. Any time you tell a story to a friend or family member about an event or incident in your day, you engage in a form of narration.

A narrative can be factual or fictional. A factual story is one that is based on, and tries to be faithful to, actual events as they unfolded in real life. A fictional story is a made-up, or imagined, story; when writing a fictional story, we can create characters and events to best fit our story.

The big distinction between factual and fictional narratives is determined by a writer's purpose. The writers of factual stories try to recount events as they actually happened, but writers of fictional stories can depart from real people and events because their intentions are not to retell a real-life event. Biographies and memoirs are examples of factual stories, whereas novels and short stories are examples of fictional stories.

Because the line between fact and fiction can often blur, it is helpful to understand what your purpose is from the beginning. Is it important that you recount history, either your own or someone else's? Or does your interest lie in reshaping the world in your own image either how you would like to see it or how you imagine it could be? Your answers will go a long way in shaping the stories you tell.

Ultimately, whether the story is fact or fiction, narrative writing tries to relay a series of events in an emotionally engaging way. You want your audience to be moved by your story, which could mean through laughter, sympathy, fear, anger, and so on. The more clearly you tell your story, the more emotionally engaged your audience is likely to be.

Exercise: Freewriting for a Narrative



On a separate sheet of paper, start brainstorming ideas for a narrative.

1. First, decide whether you want to write a factual or fictional story.

2. Pick a topic from the following list.
3. Freewrite for five minutes. Be sure to use all five minutes, and keep writing the entire time. Do not stop to think about what to write.

Here are some topics to consider to get you going:

- Childhood
- School
- Adventure
- Work
- Love
- Family
- Friends
- Vacation
- Nature
- Space

The Structure of a Narrative Essay



Chronological Order and the Use of Time

Major narrative events are most often conveyed in chronological-order, the order in which events unfold from first to last.

Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and these events are typically organized by time. However, sometimes it can be effective to begin with an exciting moment from the climax of the story (flash-forward) or a pivotal event from the past (flash-back) before returning to a chronological narration.

Certain transitional words and phrases aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed in Table of Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time.

Table of Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time

after/afterwards	as soon as	at last
before	currently	during
eventually	finally	first, second, third
later	meanwhile	next
now	since	soon
still	then	until
when/whenever	while	

The following are the other basic components of a narrative:

- **Plot:** the events as they unfold in sequence.
- **Characters:** the people who inhabit the story and move it forward. Typically, there are minor characters and main characters. The minor characters generally play supporting roles to the main character, or the protagonist.
- **Conflict:** the primary problem or obstacle that unfolds in the plot that the protagonist must solve or overcome by the end of the narrative. The way in which the protagonist resolves the conflict of the plot results in the theme of the narrative.
- **Theme:** the ultimate message the narrative is trying to express; it can be either explicit or implicit.

Narratives at Work



The Interview

When interviewing candidates for jobs, employers often ask the candidate to tell a story. The interviewer may ask, "Tell me about some time when you faced difficulty and you overcame it."

What the employer is asking for is a compelling personal narrative. To prepare for this question in a job interview, it is important to spend some time writing out your story using the narrative mode structure. This will allow you to troubleshoot rough spots in your story, condensing or adding detail to make it as interesting as possible.

Selling a Product or Service

The best way to connect with a potential client is to tell a compelling story about how your product or service was significant to you or someone you know in solving a problem or making something difficult easier to do.

Spend some time thinking about how you have used a product or service you are selling, and why it would be important to you if you were a client. Write out a short story about the significance of your product or service, and then practice telling this story to friends or colleagues and getting their feedback to make it as good as you can.

Social Media

Prepare a social media post using a chronological narrative that recounts an important event or breakthrough at your workplace. Try to make it interesting, detailed, and brief.

Think about what would be the most important information to share with your clients and colleagues. Don't forget that humor is often a great way to get more likes and shares, but make sure any humor you use is appropriate to your workplace.

Have a colleague look it over before posting.

Exercise: Drafting a Narrative



Use your freewriting exercise from the last section and start crafting a part of it chronologically into a rough plot summary. Be sure to use the time transition words and phrases listed in Table of Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time to sequence the events.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your rough plot summary.

Writing a Narrative Essay



When writing a narrative essay, start by asking yourself if you want to write a factual or fictional story, then freewrite about topics that are of general interest to you.

Once you have a general idea of what you will be writing about, you should sketch out the major events of the story that will constitute your plot. Typically, these events will be revealed chronologically and climax at a central conflict that must be resolved by the end of the story (although you might consider using a flash-forward or flash-back for dramatic effect).

As always, it is important to start with a strong introduction to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an event that is interesting to introduce the story and get it going.

The use of vivid details is crucial as you describe the events and characters in your narrative. You want the reader to emotionally engage with the world that you create in writing.

To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative. Use dialogue, when possible.

Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the central conflict of the story and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme of the piece. See the student and professional essays at the end of this section to read a sample narrative essay.

Exercise: Developing the Narrative



1. On a separate sheet of paper, add two or three paragraphs to the plot summary you started in the last section.
2. Describe, in detail, the main character by using "Show Don't Tell."
 - Develop a simple description of the character.
 - Circle a general adjective that describes your character (i.e. "tall," "good looking," "thin.")
 - Instead of using the adjective, use words that "show" what the adjective means. **Example:** Tall = As I stood next to him, I craned my neck to look up into his piercing black eyes.
3. Find any place where you said, "He said," or "She said," and substitute your description of what was said with dialogue. **Example:** He said he was scared = "I don't know about going down there, I'm frightened by dark enclosed places."
4. Work slowly to build more and more detail into your essay. Try to use all five senses in your descriptions.
5. Share your expanded draft to a peer to get feedback. Are there more places you could develop this essay?

Sample Narrative Essay



Personal Statement

One type of narrative essay you may have reason to write is a Personal Statement.

Many colleges and universities ask for a Personal Statement Essay for students who are applying for admission, to transfer, or for scholarships.

Generally, a Personal Statement asks you to respond to a specific prompt, most often asking you to describe a significant life event, a personality trait, or a goal or principle that motivates or inspires you. Personal Statements are essentially narrative essays with a

particular focus on the writer's personal life.

The following essay was responding to the prompt: "Write about an experience that made you aware of a skill or strength you possess." As you read, pay attention to the way the writer gets your attention with a strong opening, how he uses vivid details and a chronological narrative to tell his story, and how he links back to the prompt in the conclusion.

Sample Student Essay

Alen Abramyan
Professor X
English 1101-209
2/5/2013

In the Middle of Nowhere Fighting Adversity.

A three-punch combination had me seeing stars. Blood started to rush down my nose. The Russian trainers quietly whispered to one another. I knew right away that my nose was broken. Was this the end of my journey; or was I about to face adversity?

Ever since I was seven years old, I trained myself in, "The Art of Boxing." While most of the kids were out playing fun games and hanging out with their friends, I was in a damp, sweat-filled gym. My path was set to be a difficult one. Blood, sweat, and, tears were going to be an everyday occurrence.

At a very young age I learned the meaning of hard work and dedication. Most kids jumped from one activity to the next. Some quit because it was too hard; others quit because they were too bored. My father pointed this out to me on many occasions. Adults would ask my father, "why do you let your son box? It's such a dangerous sport, he could get hurt. My father always replied, "Everyone is going to get hurt in their lives, physically, mentally and emotionally. I'm making sure he's ready for the challenges he's going to face as a man. I always felt strong after hearing my father speak that way about me. I was a boy being shaped into a man, what a great feeling it was.

Year after year, I participated in boxing tournaments across the U.S. As the years went by, the work ethic and strength of character my father and coaches instilled in me, were starting to take shape. I began applying the hard work and dedication I learned in boxing, to my everyday life. I realized that when times were tough and challenges presented themselves, I wouldn't back down, I would become stronger. This confidence I had in myself, gave me the strength to pursue my boxing career in Russia.

I traveled to Russia to compete in Amateur Boxing. Tournament after tournament I came closer to my goal of making the Russian Olympic Boxing team. After successfully winning the Kaliningrad regional tournament, I began training for the Northwest Championships. This would include boxers from St. Petersburg, Pskov, Kursk and many other powerful boxing cities.

We had to prepare for a tough tournament, and that's what we did. While sparring one week before the tournament, I was caught by a strong punch combination to the nose. I knew right away it was serious. Blood began rushing down my face, as I noticed the coaches whispering to each other. They walked into my corner and examined my nose, "yeah, it's broken," Yuri Ivonovich yelled out. I was asked to clean up and to meet them in their office. I walked in to the Boxing Federation office after a quick shower. I knew right away, they wanted to replace me for the upcoming tournament. "We're investing a lot of money on you boxers and we expect good results. Why should we risk taking you with a broken nose?" Yuri Ivonovich asked me. I replied, "I traveled half-way around the world to be here, this injury isn't a problem for me." And by the look on my face they were convinced, they handed me my train ticket and wished me luck.

The train came to a screeching halt, shaking all the passengers awake. I glanced out my window, "Welcome to Cherepovets," the sign read. In the background I saw a horrific skyline of smokestacks, coughing out thick black smoke. Arriving in the city, we went straight to the weigh ins. Hundreds of boxers, all from many cities were there. The brackets were set up shortly after the weigh ins. In the Super Heavyweight division, I found out I had 4 fights to compete in, each increasing in difficulty. My first match, I made sure not a punch would land; this was true for the next two fights. Winning all three 6-0, 8-0 and 7-0 respectively. It looked like I was close to winning the whole tournament. For the finals I was to fight the National Olympic Hope Champion.

The night before the finals was coincidentally the 200th anniversary of the city. All night by my hotel, I heard screams of laughter and partying. I couldn't sleep a wink. The morning of the fight I was exhausted but anxious. I stepped into the ring knowing that I was tired. I fell behind in points quickly in the first round. I felt as if I were dreaming, with no control of the situation. I was going along for the ride and it wasn't pleasant. At the end of the second round, the coach informed me that I was far behind. "You're asleep in there," he yelled out to me, confirming how I felt. I knew this was my last chance; I had to give it my all. I mustered up enough strength to have an amazing round. It was as if I stepped out and a fresh boxer stepped in. I glanced at my coaches and see a look of approval. No matter the outcome, I felt that I had defeated adversity. My opponent's hand was raised, he won a close decision, 6-5. After I got back to my hotel, I remembered Yuri Ivonovich telling me they expected good results. "How were my results," I asked myself. In my mind, the results were great, with a broken nose and with no sleep, I came one point shy of defeating the National Olympic Hope Champion.

Even from a very young age, I knew that when my back was against the wall and adversity was knocking on my door, I would never back down. I became a stronger person, a trait my family made sure I would carry into my adult years. No matter what I'm striving for; getting into a University; receiving a scholarship; or applying for a job, I can proudly say to myself, I am Alen Abramyan and adversity is no match for me.

Online Narrative Essay Alternatives

**Note: Links to these articles may change or break. Access to them may be free of charge through your college/university library.*

Sandra Cisneros offers an example of a narrative essay in "[Only Daughter](#)" that captures her sense of her Chicana-Mexican heritage as the only daughter in a family of seven children.

Gary Shteyngart came to the United States when he was seven years old. The son of Russian Jewish parents who struggled to provide a better life for their son, he reflects on his struggles, including becoming "American" in his New Yorker essay "[Sixty-Nine Cents](#)"

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4.2: Description

Description



The Purpose of Description in Writing

Writers use description in writing to make sure that their audience is fully immersed in the words on the page. This requires a concerted effort by the writer to describe the world through the use of sensory details.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, sensory details are descriptions that appeal to our sense of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. The use of sensory details provides you the greatest possibility of relating to your audience and thus engaging them in your writing, making descriptive writing important not only during your education but also during everyday situations.

To make your writing vivid and appealing, avoid empty descriptors if possible. Empty descriptors are adjectives that can mean different things to different people. They are words like:

- good
- beautiful
- terrific
- nice

The use of such words in descriptions can lead to misreads and confusion. "A good day," for instance, can mean far different things depending on one's age, personality, or tastes.

Exercise: Practice Descriptions



On a separate sheet of paper, describe the following five items in a short paragraph. Use at least three of the five senses for each description.

- Night
- Beach
- City
- Dinner
- Stranger

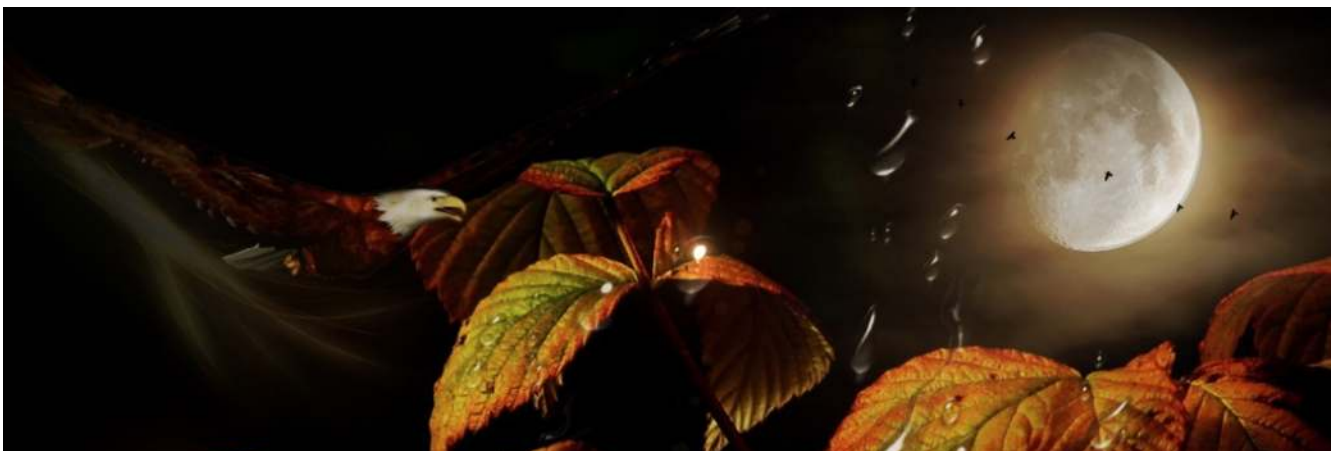
The Structure of a Description Essay



Description essays typically describe a person, a place, or an object using sensory details. The structure of a descriptive essay is more flexible than in some of the other rhetorical modes. The introduction of a description essay should set up the tone and focus of the essay. The thesis should convey the writer's overall impression of the person, place, or object described in the body paragraphs.

The organization of the essay may best follow spatial order, which means an arrangement of ideas according to physical characteristics or appearance. Depending on what the writer describes, the organization could move from top to bottom, left to right, near to far, warm to cold, frightening to inviting, and so on. For example, if the subject were a client's kitchen in the midst of renovation, you might start at one side of the room and move slowly across to the other end, describing appliances, cabinetry, and so on. Or you might choose to start with older remnants of the kitchen and progress to the new installations. Or maybe start with the floor and move up toward the ceiling.

Exercise: Organizing Description



On a separate sheet of paper, choose an organizing strategy and then execute it in a short paragraph for one of the following items:

- Train station

- Your office
- Your car
- A coffee shop
- Lobby of a movie theater
- Mystery Option: Choose an object to describe but do not indicate it. Describe it, but preserve the mystery.

Writing a Description Essay



1. Choosing a subject. The more you focus the subject, the more detailed you can make your essay. For example, if the subject is, "The World," the subject is so big that there is no room for detail. Focusing down to something as small as a single tree or a lake will help you write better detail.
2. Once you have chosen the person, place, or object you want to describe, your challenge is to write an effective thesis statement to guide your essay. Think about the most important aspect of the essay, what do you want to illuminate? Maybe you can think of a metaphor or a simile to guide you? You can also focus on your organization. Example Thesis: "My office is like the caldera of a volcano, with my computer at the center."
3. The remainder of your essay describes your subject in a way that best expresses your thesis. Remember, you should have a strong sense of how you will organize your essay.

The remainder of your essay describes your subject in a way that best expresses your thesis. Remember, you should have a strong sense of how you will organize your essay.

Choose a strategy and stick to it. Every part of your essay should use vivid sensory details. The more you can appeal to your readers' senses, the more they will be engaged in your essay. You can read a sample essay at the end of this section.

Exercise: Write a Descriptive Essay



You will begin work on a five-paragraph descriptive essay.

On a separate sheet of paper, choose something to describe. It should be a person, place, or thing that is focused enough for you to include detail.

Next, choose an organizing principle. Spacial organization usually works well for a descriptive essay.

Expanding on ideas in greater detail can be difficult. Sometimes it is helpful to write a summary paragraph then use those sentences as topic sentences for larger paragraphs. Also, it is helpful to identify empty descriptors like "tall," "big," "good," "nice." After you have identified them, circle them and go from descriptor to descriptor, finding better ways to describe your subject. It also helps to go through each of your senses during your description to make sure you have added as much as possible:

- sight: what does it look like?
- hearing: what does it sound like?
- smelling: what does it smell like?
- tasting: what does it taste like?
- sensory: what does it feel like?

Sample Description Essay



In the following student essay, notice how the writer uses sensory details to describe not only the visual appearance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s tomb, but also the experience of visiting such a historically significant and emotionally moving monument.

Sharif Ray
Professor X
English 1101
11 June 2014

The King's Tomb

The water is always so beautiful, a hypnotic shade of baby blue, with a few autumn colored leaves floating in the ripples made by the wind. This isn't a natural body of water. No wildlife swim in the shallow waves, but this water is as full of life as any ocean. In the middle of what is fittingly called the Reflecting Pool lies the closest thing African Americans have ever had to royalty. Here lie the remains of Dr. Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King.

Nestled between the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change and the original Ebenezer Baptist Church is a beautiful white marble monument, warmly bathed in the lights circling the tomb of our late civil rights leaders. Following Dr. King's assassination in April 1968, he was first interred at South View Cemetery, a final resting place largely reserved for African Americans during that period. It took nearly a decade before he was exhumed and placed in the beautiful ivory stone structure that he now shares with his beloved wife Coretta. The tomb, erected in 1977, sits within the south end of the Reflecting Pool. Seemingly suspended on the bright blue water, the tomb displays scriptures that only capture a small portion of the legacy left by these great leaders. Engraved on Dr. King's portion reads, "Free at last, Free at last, Thank God Almighty I'm free at last!" from his pivotal "I Have a Dream" speech given during the March on Washington in 1963. I can't help but attempt to recite the

mantra in my head with the same bravado and conviction as Dr. King had when he gave the speech over fifty years ago. While the saying is a beautiful incantation, fit for a King, the cost at which that freedom was attained is still heartbreaking.

In a scene reminiscent of Romeo and Juliet, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, who passed away in January 2006 after a prolonged illness, lies next to her slain husband. For a short period following her death Mrs. King was interred in a smaller yet equally beautiful tomb directly across from her late husband. Spectacular floral arrangements surrounded her tomb as scores of mourners came from afar to pay their respects to the First Lady of the Civil Rights Movement. In November 2006, she was laid to rest in a beautiful new tomb beside her husband. The words "And now abide Faith, Hope, Love, These Three, but the greatest of these is Love," emblazon her final resting place. No truer instance could describe her legacy.

Auburn Avenue, shrouded in darkness, is void of people aside from the few vagrants that aimlessly roam the streets. Heat from the Eternal Flame warms my back as I stare off into space. The brilliant glow of the LED lights strategically placed around the tomb and the amber flicker of the Eternal Flame are the only lights that seem to suit this moment. Kneeling as if I'm preparing to pray, I take a moment to reflect. Through my clenched eyes I can hear the soft splashes of the water, the gas fueled roar of the Eternal Flame. The ambient noise of car horns, traffic and construction fade to nearly a whisper. I envision the March on Washington. I can feel the sting of water hoses pelting my black skin. I can hear the sharp sonics of police dogs barking. The feeling is overwhelming. My eyelashes clump together from the tears winning their battle against my eyelids. Nearby is a place of worship, a place where anyone can still feel the spirit of past congregations, a place where the walls hold almost as much history as any Smithsonian exhibit.

Just a few feet away sits the original Ebenezer Baptist Church, a beautiful, rustic old building left largely intact from the days of Atlanta's past. Walking inside is like stepping into a time warp, instantly sending you to the heart of the Civil Rights Movement. With the exception of a few strategically placed speakers, the church is left in its pure form. Dr. King's voice echoes through wooden pews playing his famous "Drum Major" speech, given during his final sermon at Ebenezer on February 4, 1968. With closed eyes, I have difficulty telling what era I am in. Given with almost Machiavellian prediction and passion, ten minutes engulfed with his powerful words makes me feel as though I've been baptized, born again.

Surrounded with reminders of our history's darkest time, this place brings me peace. There's an aura in this place. A powerful spirit that infiltrates my conscience with thoughts of struggle, loss and freedom. The reality of this place forces my mind to reevaluate my own mortality. Even with the knowledge of how Dr. King was vilified, degraded, and executed, his death serves as a shining beacon of light. A lone ray of sun through the seemingly endless cloud of racism and intolerance. Coretta's grace, beauty and resilience in the face of unspeakable tragedy and injustice is incomparable. Her social work and philanthropy should be an influence to women of all walks of life.

The legacy that Dr. and Mrs. King leave behind is a unfulfilled one. Equality in America has improved since Dr. King's assassination but his dream is still unrealized. There is turmoil within the King family regarding funding and management of the King Memorial, leaving the future of this serene place uncertain. Engraved on the Stone of Hope, a newly completed Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C., reads, "Out of the Mountain of Despair, a Stone of Hope." Although we still have a mountain to climb, The King's Tomb is surely my Stone of Hope.

Online Descriptive Essay Alternatives

**Note: Links to these articles may change or break. However, access to them may be free of charge if accessed through your college/university library database.*

Susan Berne visits New York and describes her impressions in the New York Times article, "[Where Nothing Says Everything](#)" [opens in new window](#) also called "Ground Zero."

Heather Rogers provides a detailed description of a landfill that challenges the reader to consider his or her own consumption and waste in [this excerpt opens in new window](#) from the book *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage*.

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4.3: Classification

Classification



The Purpose of Classification in Writing

The purpose of classification is to break down broad subjects into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts.

We classify things in our daily lives all the time, often without even thinking about it. For example, cars can be classified by type (convertible, sedan, station-wagon, or SUV) or by the fuel they use (diesel, petrol, electric, or hybrid).

Smaller categories, and the way in which these categories are created, help us make sense of the world.

Keep this idea in mind when writing a classification essay. It's best to choose topics that you know well when writing classification essays. The more you know about a topic, the more you can break it into smaller, more interesting parts. Adding interest and insight will enhance your classification essays.

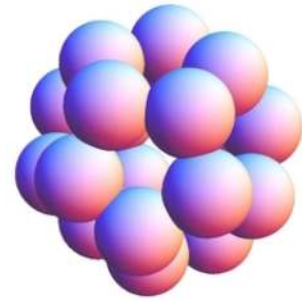
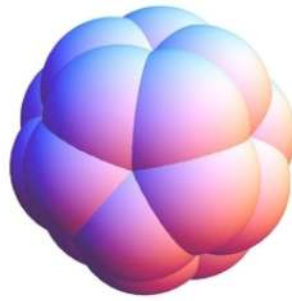
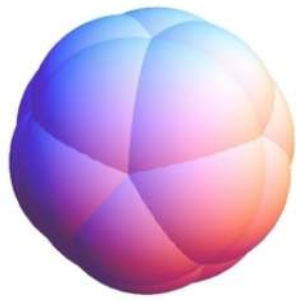
Exercise: Classification



Break the following categories into smaller classifications.

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

The Structure of a Classification Essay



Broad Topic -> Break It Down

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

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

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

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

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

Writing a Classification Essay

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

topic + subtopics + rationale for the subtopics = thesis.

The organizing strategy of a classification essay is dictated by the initial topic and the subsequent subtopics. Each body paragraph is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subtopics.

In a way, coming up with a strong topic pays double rewards in a classification essay. Not only do you have a good topic, but you also have a solid organizational structure to use as your outline while drafting. Be sure you use strong details and explanations for each subcategory paragraph that help explain and support your thesis. Also, be sure to give examples to illustrate your points.

Finally, write a conclusion that links all the subgroups together again. The conclusion should successfully wrap up your essay by connecting it to your topic initially discussed in the introduction. See the sample professional essays at the end of the section for examples of the classification essay.

Online Classification Essay Examples

**Note: Links to these articles may change or break. However, access to them may be free of charge if accessed through your college/university library database.*

Amy Tan describes her relationship with her heritage, her mother, and her languages in "[Mother Tongue](#)."

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4.4: Process Essay

Process Essay



The Purpose of the Process Essay

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

Almost everything we do involves following a step-by-step process.

From learning to ride a bike as a child to starting a new job as an adult, we initially needed instructions to effectively execute the task. Likewise, we have likely had to instruct others, so we know how important good directions are and how frustrating it is when they are poorly put together.

Exercise: Step by Step Process



On a separate sheet of paper, make a bulleted list of all the steps required to complete one of the following processes:

- Tying a shoelace
- Parallel parking
- Planning a party
- Making a sandwich

The Structure of a Process Essay



The process essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the goal of the process. The organization of a process essay typically follows chronological order.

The steps of the process are conveyed in the order in which they usually occur, and so your body paragraphs will be constructed based on these steps. If a particular step is complicated and needs a lot of explaining, then it will likely take up a paragraph on its own. If a series of simple steps is easy to understand, then the steps can be grouped into a single paragraph.

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

Finally, it's a good idea to always have someone else read your process analysis to make sure it makes sense. Once we get too close to a subject, it is difficult to determine how clearly an idea is coming across. Having a peer read over your analysis will serve as a good way to troubleshoot any confusing spots.

Writing a Process Essay



Choose a topic that is interesting, is relatively complex, and can be explained in a series of steps. As with other rhetorical writing modes, it is best to choose a process that you know well so that you can more easily describe the finer details about each step in the process.

Your thesis statement should come at the end of your introduction, and it should state the final outcome of the process you are describing.

Body paragraphs are composed of the steps in the process. Each step should be expressed using strong details and clear examples.

Directional Essay

If you are writing a directional essay, you should provide every detail necessary for your reader to complete the process. As you are writing, try to do the thing you are describing in order to identify missing steps.

Instructional Essay

If you are writing an instructional essay, your body paragraphs should explain the process and how it works, although you should not expect your reader to be actually performing the process.

Use time transition phrases to help organize steps in the process and to orient readers. The conclusion should thoroughly describe the result of the process described in the body paragraphs. See the student paper below, "Keep Them in Stitches," or one of the sample professional essays to read an example of a process analysis essay.

Sample Process Essay



"Keep Them in Stitches," by Jacob Gallman-Dreiling, describes the process of finding the perfect yarn for a knitting project. As you read, pay attention to the words and phrases the author uses to help orient the reader, as well as the strong details that bring the subject to life.

We begin with his outline, so you can see how he developed the essay.

Outline

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling
English 1101 Honors
Dr. X
24 February 2019

Outline

Thesis statement: Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the preferences of the person for whom the project is being made, the availability of the yarn, and the type of yarn called for by the pattern.

I. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the preferences of the person for whom the project is being made.

A. The knitter must determine if the recipient has any allergies or sensitivities.

1. Wool yarn will aggravate allergies to lanolin.

2. Acrylic yarns can be scratchy or leave splinters.

B. The knitter must consider the type of project.

1. Warmer items should be made with animal fibers.

2. Lighter items should be made with cotton.

C. The knitter must consider the care of the finished garment.

1. Wool yarn should be hand washed with cold water.
 2. Cotton and acrylic yarns are machine washable.
- D. The knitter must determine what color the recipient prefers.
1. Solid colors are great for sweaters and accessories like professional iPad cases.
 2. Variegated yarn makes for show-stopping pieces and can help maintain the knitter's interest through the end of the project.
- II. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the availability of the yarn.
- A. Many people prefer to shop for yarn at a local yarn store.
1. An advantage to shopping in person is the ability to touch the yarn.
 2. An advantage to shopping at the local yarn store is the knowledgeable staff, many of whom have been knitting for years.
 3. An advantage to shopping at the yarn store is that the staff can provide ready assistance and often have first-hand knowledge of the yarn the knitter intends to use.
- B. Other people prefer to shop at one of the many online retailers.
1. Online retailers typically have greater stock availability.
 2. Online retailers also provide tutorial videos.
- III. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the type of yarn called for by the pattern.
- A. The knitter must determine the proper yarn weight for the project.
1. Fingering, sport, and DK weight yarns are good for smaller projects like socks or baby clothes.
 2. Worsted, bulky, and super bulky are great for sweaters, scarves, blankets, and washcloths.
- B. The knitter must determine the recipient's preferences.
1. Some people prefer sweaters with a small gauge.
 2. Some people prefer socks with a large gauge

Sample Process Essay

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling
English 1101 Honors
Dr. X
24 February 2014

Keep Them in Stitches

The popularity of knitting is cyclical, rising and falling according to the prevailing opinion of women's places in society. Though internationally a unisex hobby, knitting is pervasively thought of as a woman's hobby in the United States. Knitting is currently enjoying a boost in popularity as traditionally minded women pick up the craft while women who enjoy subverting traditional gender roles have also picked up the needles to reclaim "the lost domestic arts" and give traditionally feminine crafts the proper respect. American men are also picking up the needles in greater numbers, with men's knitting guilds and retreats nationwide. This rise in popularity has made the receiving of hand-knit items special, and many people enjoy receiving these long-lasting, painstakingly crafted items. For any knitters, the perfect gift starts by choosing the perfect yarn. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the preferences of the person for whom the project is being made, the availability of the yarn, and the type of yarn recommended by the pattern.

In order to select the right yarn for a knitting project, the knitter must take into account the preferences of the recipient of the knitted item. The most basic choice is the composition of the yarn to be used. Natural fibers are luxurious and tend to age

better. Nevertheless, the knitter must determine if the recipient has any allergies or sensitivities. Wool yarn, for example, will aggravate allergies in those sensitive to lanolin, but mohair, alpaca, cotton, or angora will not cause discomfort. Acrylic is a synthetic yarn, but it can be scratchy or leave splinters. A second consideration is the type of project the knitter plans to complete: each project requires a specific type of yarn. For warmer items such as sweaters, blankets, or mittens, animal fibers are best. Socks, warmer-weather items, and household accessories are best served using cotton. One must also give thought to the care of the finished project. Items made from wool yarn survive best when hand washed in cold water whereas cotton and acrylic items are machine washable.

Once the type of yarn has been chosen, the knitter should consider what color yarn the recipient prefers. A solid color garment looks more professional and functions as a base piece in a wardrobe or interior design. Sweaters, iPad and tablet cases, as well as belts are well-suited to solid colors. Pieces made with variegated colors, in which the yarn has either multiple colors or shades of the same basic color, make for show pieces and accessories. Socks, gloves, scarves, and cowls are great projects for variegated yarn. Variegated yarn colors tend to keep the knitter's interest, but multicolored yarn can be difficult to use when working on larger projects which require multiple skeins of yarn. Due to the way yarn is dyed, the color at the end of one skein may not match the color at the beginning of the next skein.

The next step in determining the right yarn for a project is availability, particularly where to purchase the yarn. Some people prefer to shop at a local store for yarn because it offers many advantages. Shopping in person allows the knitter to feel the yarn he or she intends to purchase. This can help sway the knitter's opinion in regards to yarn choice. The staff at a local shop is often knowledgeable; many of them have been knitting for years, and they are usually ready to offer assistance with projects or yarn selection. If a knitter does not live near a yarn store, there are many online retailers who can fulfill their orders. Online retailers typically have a larger selection of yarns and patterns available for download. Since they cannot give personal assistance, many compensate for this deficiency by providing free tutorial videos.

Finally, choosing the right yarn for a project relies on the type of yarn called for in the knitting pattern. Patterns are highly adaptable. Most things in a pattern can be substituted: yarn type, yarn weight, color, and number of stitches can all be substituted to fit the knitter's desire, but the pattern will provide a good place to start. The yarn weight, which determines the gauge of the project, is one of the most basic substitutions. Fingering or lace weight, sport, and DK weight are lighter weight yarns typically good for smaller projects like socks or baby clothes. Those types of yarn tend to be knit on smaller needles and produce a smaller stitch. Worsted, bulky, and super-bulky yarns are chunkier, knit on larger needles, and provide beautiful, large stitches. They are well suited for sweaters, scarves, blankets, and washcloths. The preferences of the recipient must also be taken into account. Some people prefer sweaters with a small stitch, while others prefer thick, warm socks to wear around the house.

The right yarn for a knitting project is one that meets the preferences of the recipient of the project, is readily available, and matches the needs of the pattern. After the project is completed and given to the intended recipient, both the knitter and receiver can bask in the adulation the finished garment brings. These hand-knit items can be passed down for several generations, truly becoming a gift that keeps on giving.

Online Process Analysis Essay Examples

**Note: Links to these articles may change or break. However, access to them may be free of charge if accessed through your college/university library database.*

Stanley Fish, an American literary theorist, public intellectual, and professor of humanities and law, tells us in an article in the New York Times why "[Meanwhile: Getting Coffee Is Hard to Do](#)"

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4.5: Definition

Definition



The Purpose of Definition in Writing

The purpose of a definition essay may seem self-explanatory: to write an extended definition of a word or term. But defining terms in writing is often more complicated than just consulting a dictionary. In fact, the way we define terms can have far-reaching consequences for individuals as well as collective groups.

Take, for example, a word like "alcoholism." The way in which one defines alcoholism depends on its legal, moral, and medical contexts. Lawyers may define alcoholism in terms of its legality; parents may define alcoholism in terms of its morality; and doctors will define alcoholism in terms of symptoms and diagnostic criteria.

Think also of terms that people tend to debate in our broader culture. How we define words, such as *marriage* and *climate change*, has enormous impact on policy decisions and even on daily decisions. Debating the definition of a word or term might have an impact on your relationship or your job, or it might simply be a way to understand an unfamiliar phrase in popular culture or a technical term in a new profession.

Defining terms within a relationship, or any other context, can be difficult at first, but once a definition is established between two people or a group of people, it is easier to have productive dialogues. Definitions, then, establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse, which is why they are so important.

When writing definition essays, avoid terms that are too simple, that lack complexity. Think in terms of concepts, such as hero, immigration, or loyalty, rather than physical objects.

Definitions of concepts, rather than objects, are often fluid and contentious, making for a more effective definition essay. For definition essays, try to think of concepts in which you have a personal stake. You are more likely to write a more engaging definition essay if you are writing about an idea that has value and importance to you.



 Definitions play a critical role in all workplace environments. Take the term sexual harassment, for example. Sexual harassment is broadly defined on the federal level, but each company may have additional criteria that define it further. Knowing how your workplace defines and treats all sexual harassment allegations is important. Think, too, about how your company defines lateness, productivity, or contributions.

Exercise: Definition



On a separate sheet of paper, write about a time in your own life in which the definition of a word, or the lack of a definition, caused an argument.

Your term could be something as simple as the category of an all-star in sports or how to define a good movie. Or it could be something with higher stakes and wider impact, such as a political argument.

Explain how the conversation began, how the argument hinged on the definition of the word, and how the incident was finally resolved.

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

The Structure of a Definition Essay



The definition essay opens with a general discussion of the term to be defined. You then state your definition of the term as your thesis.

The rest of the essay should explain the rationale for your definition. Remember that a dictionary's definition is limiting, so you should not rely strictly on the dictionary entry. Indeed, unless you are specifically addressing an element of the dictionary definition (perhaps to dispute or expand it), it is best to avoid quoting the dictionary in your paper.

Instead, consider the context in which you are using the word. Context identifies the circumstances, conditions, or setting in which something exists or occurs. Often words take on different meanings depending on the context in which they are used.

For example, the ideal leader in a battlefield setting could likely be very different from a leader in an elementary school setting. If a context is missing from the essay, the essay may be too short or the main points could be vague and confusing.

The remainder of the essay should explain different aspects of the term's definition. For example, if you were defining a good leader in an elementary classroom setting, you might define such a leader according to personality traits: patience, consistency, and

flexibility. Each attribute would be explained in its own paragraph. Be specific and detailed; flesh out each paragraph with examples and connections to the larger context.



It is a good idea to occasionally assess your role in the workplace. You can do this through the process of definition. Identify your role at work by defining not only the routine tasks but also those gray areas where your responsibilities might overlap with those of others. Coming up with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities can add value to your resume and even increase productivity in the workplace

Exercise: Defining your Terms



On a separate sheet of paper, define one of the following items in your own terms. If you can, establish a context for your definition.

- Bravery
- Adulthood
- Consumer culture
- Violence
- Art

Elements Page



Writing a Definition Essay

Choose a topic that will be complex enough to discuss at length. Keep in mind that choosing a word or phrase of personal relevance often leads to a more interesting and engaging essay.

After you have chosen your word or phrase, start your essay with an introduction that establishes the relevancy of the term in the chosen specific context. Your thesis comes at the end of the introduction, and it should clearly state your definition of the term in the specific context.

Establishing a context from the beginning will orient readers and minimize misunderstandings; for example, if you are defining the word childhood, you will need to explain if you are discussing the developmental stages of childhood, the history and evolution of the notion of childhood, or the cultural attitudes towards childhood in a certain country.

The body paragraphs should each be dedicated to explaining a different facet of your definition. Make sure to use clear examples and strong details to illustrate your points.

Your concluding paragraph should pull together all the different elements of your definition to ultimately reinforce your thesis and explain why your definition is a compelling interpretation of your chosen word or term.

Sample Definition Essay



This essay focuses on the definition of "justice" and how that definition is related to the mass incarceration of black men in America. Notice how the introduction gives context before introducing the word and its definition.

Also, notice how this student uses sources by providing parenthetical documentation throughout the essay, and a Works Cited on a separate page at the end of the document.

Student Essay

Darius Porter
English 1101-H
Dr. XXX
September 24, 2019

Mass Incarceration:

The Real Trends of the United States Justice System

The favorite part of the national anthem by most people is "the land of the free," but how much freedom do you really have in a country that has the highest incarceration rate in the world? Record levels of incarceration have proven that the U.S justice system is a failed system in need of serious reform. The justice system was designed to punish individuals equally for their crimes and then rehabilitate them back into society.

However, today's perception of the justice system is that it promotes mass incarceration, which results in a billion dollar prison industry, unjust mandatory sentencing, and racial and low income targeting. Government officials' desire for higher conviction rates have had a negative impact on their sense of morality, which has altered their idea of justice.

The definition of justice will differ from person to person, but no matter who is giving the definition, the word "equality" should not be left out. Justice is the golden rule - treat others how you would like to be treated. Justice is blind; it does not see

age, race, or social classification. Justice should punish criminals, teach them a lesson, the rehabilitate them into society. It is the balance of fairness and righteousness, a scale that should not tip to the left or the right, a scale that has been broken by the United States of America.

America's justice system has lost its deeply rooted values, which are, "to keep communities safe, to respect and restore victims, and to return offenders who leave prison to be self-sufficient and law-abiding" (DeRoche). The shifts behind the justice system began in the 1980's when the U.S. was battling against a drug war. The methods the government used to overcome the drug war were higher conviction rates, mandatory minimum sentences, and mass incarceration. Although these were once solutions to a major problem, today the implementation of these policies has caused negative effects on both society and the justice system.

For a country with trillions of dollars of debt, does a billion dollar prison industry sound productive, especially when both crime rates and incarceration rates are increasing? "The United States incarcerates 2.3 million individuals - more people, both per capita and in absolute terms, than any other nation in the world including Russia, China and Iran," (Shapiro) with a ratio of, "1 in 100 residents [in prison] and "1 in 31 citizens on parole or probation" (DeRoche). How do the aforementioned statistics relate to a billion prison dollar industry? Well, "government employment in criminal justice has grown by 1 million employees since 1980" (Alexander qtd. in DeRoche). That's an extensive increase in capital, funds that will be deducted from hard earned taxpayer dollars. Another costly fact is, "prosecutors and police budgets are rewarded for convictions, and they are not held to account for their contribution to spending in prisons" (DeRoche). So far, our price tag is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, but this only amounts to a minor chunk of the billions that are poured into the prison industry yearly.

Spending billions on a prison industry is an economic failure, "but mass incarceration provides a gigantic windfall for one special interest group: the private prison industry. As current incarceration levels harm the nation as a whole, for-profit prisons obtain taxpayer dollars in ever greater amounts," (Shapiro). A huge amount of the billions that go into the prison industry goes into private prisons that the government pays to house inmates. While our local, state, and federal governments are in deep fiscal deficits, according to Shapiro, private prison executives are enjoying yearly bonuses of over 3 million dollars each. Shapiro cites the Securities and Exchange Commission, the largest private prison company, which reports that: "The demand for our facilities and services could be adversely affected by "leniency in conviction or parole standards and sentencing practices..." As, we, citizens are concerned over prison spending cost and mass incarceration rates, private prison companies get to have their cake and eat it too.

United States mandatory sentencing laws are one of the leading contributors to the billion-dollar prison industry and private prison executives even admit it, "[private prison companies] profits depend on locking up more people," (Shapiro); on the other hand, mandatory sentencing laws pose a prejudice upon the accused. To give someone a minimum sentence before they are found guilty of a crime is cruel, bias, and unfair. Essentially, it is the crime that you are guilty of that sentences you, not the judge. These minimum sentences do not take into account your character, criminal history, or your reason for committing the crime. It is a problem when first time offenders and repeat offenders receive the same sentence for a crime. Nevertheless, prisons are filled with first time, non-violent, offenders subject to unjust minimum sentences; which is another reason the United States is in need of serious criminal justice reform.

A drastic effect on society that results from mass incarceration and mandatory sentencing laws is the targeting of people based race and/or income level. As stated by DeRoche, "Our minority population is a reliably easier target for getting the numbers by which society measures law enforcement today," so when police departments are pressured about high crime rates they pursue marijuana and petty crime convictions from minorities. In a further detailed study by Palta "Arrest rates for marijuana possession are four times as high for black Americans as for whites. [Although] black men spend an average of 20 percent longer behind bars in federal prisons than their white peers [even though they committed] the same crimes." Although these are interesting facts, the more shocking facts estimate that, "1 in 3 black men will spend time behind bars during their lifetime, compared with 1 in 6 Latino men and 1 in 17 white men" (Palta). While racial targeting is a major contributor of the statistics mentioned, income levels are also a component.

The U.S. Constitution states that all citizens are entitled to equal protection under the law. The reality though, is that the accused lower income citizen will experience the justice system differently than the accused higher income citizen. A wealthier citizen will have more money to pay for a better, more experienced lawyer, which is important because your lawyer is the person who is most important in defending you against the charges brought against you. In many instances, a person of a lower

income bracket cannot afford a lawyer, so they are forced to continue the judicial process with a public defender. A public defender is an appointed lawyer who is provided by, and works for, the courts. It is widely argued that public defenders are on the side of the prosecutors. Regardless of the fact, "Statistically, trolling for low-level law breakers has distracted the public from demanding justice where it is most needed," (DeRoche). Your income will determine your experience in the justice system. People of a lower social classification may not get the protection under the law, which is needed so that the corruption will not continue.

When the crime rate and the incarceration rate are rising simultaneously, it is apparent that the United States criminal justice system is not very effective. In conclusion, DeRoche states, "Beyond the dollars spent, our failing criminal justice system contributes to our cultural decline." A true justice system is one that lowers the crime rate by punishing criminals while promoting equality, fairness, and rehabilitation skills. Robbing individuals of their freedom through record levels of mass incarceration results in a billion dollar prison industry, mandatory sentencing, and racial and low income targeting. Higher convictions rates will not solve the problem, only criminal justice reform will.

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Online Definition Essays

**Note: Links to these articles may change or break. However, access to them may be free of charge if accessed through your college/university library database.*

Judy Brady provides a humorous look at responsibilities and relationships in the New York Magazine article, "[I Want a Wife](#)"

Philip Levine defines "[What Work Is](#)" in his eponymous poem on the Poetry Foundation web site.

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4.6: Comparison and Contrast

Comparison and Contrast



The Purpose of Comparison and Contrast in Writing

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

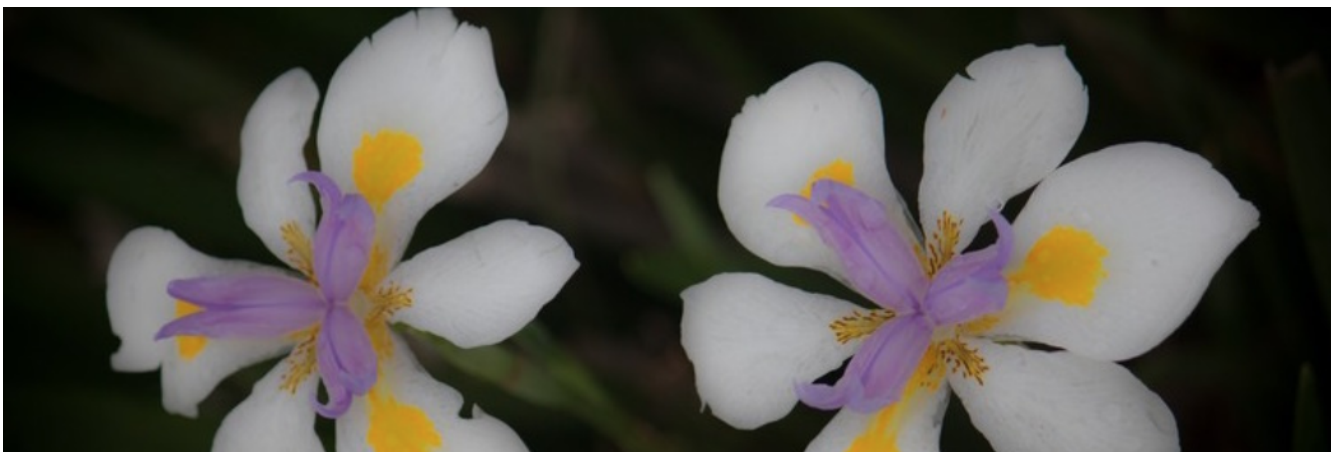
The key to a good compare-and-contrast essay is to choose two or more subjects that connect in a meaningful way. The purpose of conducting the comparison or contrast is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities.

If you wanted to focus on contrasting two subjects you would not pick apples and oranges; rather, you might choose to compare and contrast two types of oranges or two types of apples to highlight subtle differences.

For example, Red Delicious apples are sweet, while Granny Smiths are tart and acidic. Drawing distinctions between elements in a similar category will increase the audience's understanding of that category, which is the purpose of the compare-and-contrast essay.

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

Exercise: Comparison & Contrast



Choose one of the following topics:

- Romantic comedies
- Internet search engines
- Cell phones
- Department stores
- Fast food chains

Post about how you would compare two items under that topic, and a good reason to do so.

- THEN -

Write a post about how you would contrast the same two items and a good reason to do so.

The Structure of a Comparison-and-Contrast Essay



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

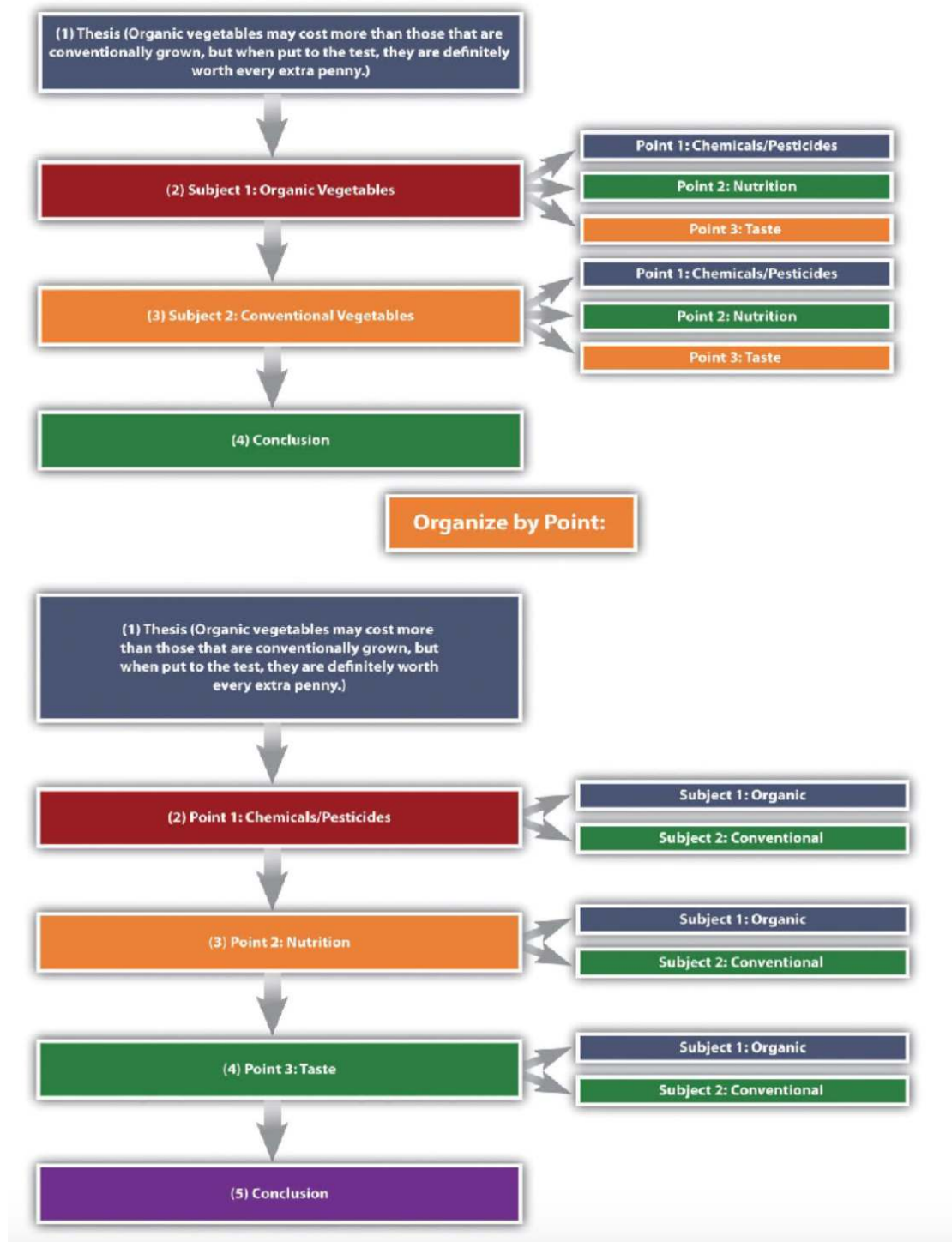
Thesis statement: Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to the test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.

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

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

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

The organizational structure you choose depends on the nature of the topic, your purpose, and your audience.



Given that compare-and-contrast essays analyze the relationship between two subjects, it is helpful to have some phrases on hand that will cue the reader to such analysis.

Phrases of Comparison and Contrast

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

Writing a Comparison-and-Contrast Essay



First choose whether you want to compare seemingly disparate subjects, contrast seemingly similar subjects, or compare and contrast subjects.

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

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

Make sure to use comparison and contrast phrases to cue the reader to the ways in which you are analyzing the relationship between the subjects.

After you finish analyzing the subjects, write a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the essay and reinforces your thesis. See the student essay that follows, "Batman: A Hero for Any Time," as well as the sample essays at the end of this chapter to read some examples of the compare-and-contrast essay.

Sample Comparison-and-Contrast Essay



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

Outline

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling
English 1101 Honors
Dr. Rosemary D. Cox
16 March 2019

Outline

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

- I. The backstory for Batman has always remained the same.
 - A. Bruce Wayne is the son of wealthy socialites.
 - 1. Bruce Wayne's parents are murdered in front of him.
 - 2. Bruce Wayne grows up to inherit his parents' fortune.
 - B. Bruce Wayne becomes Batman to avenge the violence of his parents' death.
 - 1. Batman fights crime with the help of Commissioner Gordon and others.
 - 2. Batman employs an arsenal of non-lethal weapons to aid him.
- II. The characterization of Batman has changed to fit the changing expectations of a hero.
 - A. In the Silver Age of comic books, Batman was portrayed as a sunny, pulpy character.
 - 1. Batman's stories had to adhere to the guidelines of the Comics Code Authority.
 - a. Characters could not use concealed weapons.
 - b. Stories required "morals."
 - c. Stories could not use kidnapping or excessive violence.
 - d. Stories incorporated elements of science fiction.
 - e. Stories had limitations on the portrayal of female characters.
 - 2. Batman's suits often had ridiculous properties he conveniently prepared for the upcoming mission.
 - B. In modern portrayals, Batman is a tortured and flawed character.
 - 1. Batman is haunted by the death of his parents.
 - 2. Batman has become a skilled detective and fighter.

3. Batman's suit is more armor than spandex.
 4. Batman is haunted by his mistakes.
 5. Batman and Commissioner Gordon conspire to hide the truth about Harvey Dent from the people of Gotham.
- III. The characterization of Batman's associates has changed to fit the changing expectations of a hero.
- A. In the Silver Age of comic books, Batman's associates were correspondingly light- hearted.
 1. Characters like Ace the Bat-Hound, Bat-Mice, and Batwoman were created to draw in children.
 2. Issues were built around a villain-of-the-week.
 - B. In modern portrayals, Batman's associates deal with real consequences and changes.
 1. Dick Grayson grows up and goes to college.
 2. Batgirl is paralyzed by the Joker.
 3. Joker is given several conflicting backstories explaining his psychosis.
 4. Catwoman has changed from a harmless cat-burglar to a reformed prostitute.

Student Essay

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling
English 1101 Honors
Dr. Rosemary D. Cox
16 March 2019

Batman: A Hero for Any Time

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

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

While the key details of Batman's backstory have remained unchanged for almost seventy-five years, his characterization has changed to suit the ever-evolving expectations of a superhero. When the character debuted in the Silver Age of comics "the decades between 1950 and 1970" he was a sunny, pulpy character: he was billed as the "World's Greatest Detective" and performed as such, while reflecting what is considered to be a more innocent time. His villains were grand, but he outsmarted them using his intelligence and science. The introduction of the Comics Code Authority in 1954 restricted not only the way that stories were presented but also the types of stories that could be presented. For instance, concealed weapons were forbidden, stories were required to have "morals," and kidnapping and excessive violence were forbidden. As such, Batman's stories began incorporating elements of science fiction. As the comics demonstrate, Batman famously repels aliens and an

island of animatronic dinosaurs during this period. Also, female characters in the Batman stories of this time are poorly treated. The villain Catwoman had to be shelved due to regulations regarding women and violence, while the original Batwoman was brought on as a potential love interest to quiet the growing assertion of conservative culture warriors that Batman and Robin were, in fact, lovers. When this version of Batwoman was deemed unnecessary, she was written out. This period is also famous for Batman having "batsuits" with heretofore unseen special properties, such as fireproofing and thermal heating.

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

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

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

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

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

and comic books depict superheroes. With all the changes occurring in culture worldwide, who knows what the next generation's Batman will be like?

Online Compare-and-Contrast Essays

**Note: Links to these articles may change or break. However, access to them may be free of charge if accessed through your college/university library database.*

Deborah Tannen compares and contrasts conversation styles in this Washington Post article, "[Sex, Lies and Conversation](#)"

Alex Wright examines communication patterns, old and new in the New York Times article, "[Friending, Ancient or Otherwise](#)"

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4.7: Cause and Effect

Cause and Effect



The Purpose of Cause and Effect in Writing

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

A cause is something that produces an event or condition; an effect is what results from an event or condition. The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena relate in terms of origins and results.

Sometimes the connection between cause and effect is clear, but often determining the exact relationship between the two is very difficult. For example, the following effects of a cold may be easily identifiable: a sore throat, runny nose, and a cough. But determining the cause of the sickness can be far more difficult. A number of causes are possible, and to complicate matters, these possible causes could have combined to cause the sickness.

That is, more than one cause may be responsible for any given effect. Therefore, cause-and-effect discussions are often complicated and frequently lead to debates and arguments.

Indeed, you can use the complex nature of cause and effect to your advantage. Often it is not necessary, or even possible, to find the exact cause of an event or to name the exact effect. So, when formulating a thesis, you can claim one of a number of causes or effects to be the primary, or main, cause or effect. As soon as you claim that one cause or one effect is more crucial than the others, you have developed a thesis.

Exercise: Cause and Effect



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

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

Exercise: Cause and Effect Thesis Statements



Write a cause-and-effect thesis statement for each of the following five broad topics.

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

The Structure of a Cause-and-Effect Essay



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

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

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

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

Regardless of which structure you choose, be sure to explain each element of the essay fully and completely. Explaining complex relationships requires the full use of evidence, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and anecdotes.

Be careful of resorting to empty speculation. In writing, speculation amounts to unsubstantiated guessing. Writers are particularly prone to such trappings in cause-and-effect arguments due to the complex nature of finding links between phenomena. Be sure to have clear evidence to support the claims that you make.

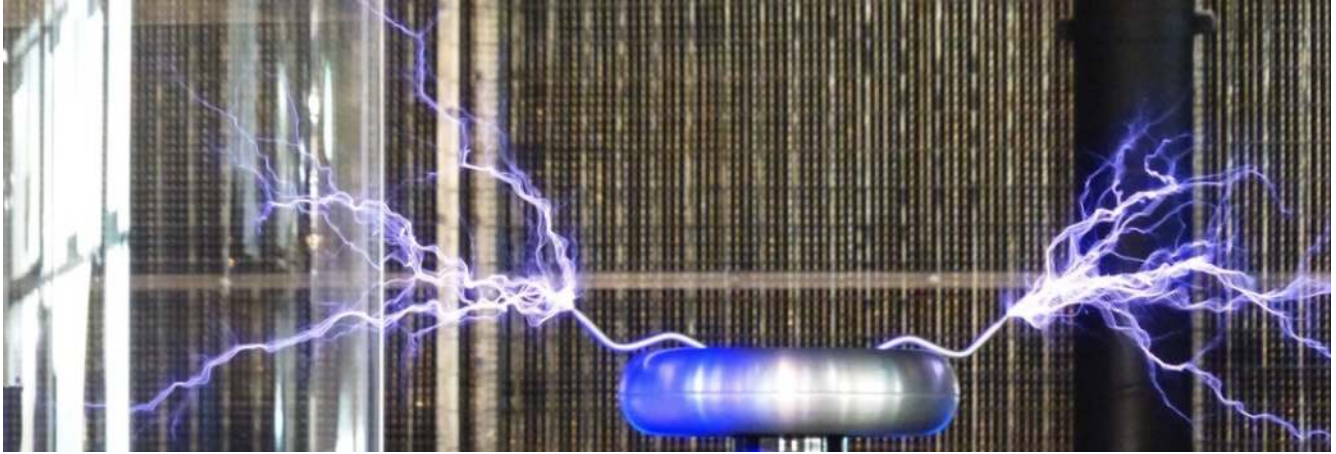
Because cause-and-effect essays determine how phenomena are linked, they make frequent use of certain words and phrases that denote such linkage.

Table of Phrases: Causation

as a result	consequently
because	due to
hence	since
thus	therefore

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

Writing a Cause-and-Effect Essay



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

Organize your essay by starting with either the cause-then-effect structure or the effect-then-cause structure. Within each section, you should clearly explain and support the causes and effects using a full range of evidence.

If you are writing about multiple causes or multiple effects, you may choose to sequence either in terms of order of importance. In other words, order the causes from least to most important (or vice versa), or order the effects from least to most important (or vice versa).

Use the phrases of causation when trying to forge connections between various events or conditions. This will help you to organize your ideas and orient the reader. End your essay with a conclusion that summarizes your main points and reinforces your thesis. At the end of this section you can read a sample cause-and-effect essay.

Online Cause-and-Effect Essay Examples

**Note: Links to these articles may change or break. However, access to them may be free of charge if accessed through your college/university library database.*

Norman Mailer examines cause and effect in boxing in "The Death of Benny Paret"

Alan Weisman examines the human impact on the planet and its effects in the Discover Magazine article, "[Earth Without People](#)"

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4.8: Persuasion

Persuasion



The Purpose of Persuasive Writing

The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies that more than one opinion on the subject can be argued.

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different. An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.

Most of us feel inclined to try to win the arguments we enter. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your opinion as a valid one, not simply the right one.

The Structure of a Persuasive Essay

The following five features make up the structure of a persuasive essay:

1. Introduction and thesis
2. Opposing and qualifying ideas
3. Strong evidence in support of claim
4. Style and tone of language
5. A compelling conclusion

Creating an Introduction and Thesis

The persuasive essay begins with an engaging introduction that presents the general topic. The thesis typically appears somewhere in the introduction and clearly states the writer's point of view.

Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

Because an argument implies differing points of view on the subject, you must be sure to acknowledge those opposing ideas. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus it is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.

Try to address opposing arguments earlier rather than later in your essay. Rhetorically speaking, ordering your positive arguments last allows you to better address ideas that conflict with your own because it allows you to focus on countering those arguments. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else's. You have the last word.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. Readers will know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space. It

is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish. In effect, you are conceding early on that your argument is not the ultimate authority on a given topic.

Such humility can go a long way toward earning credibility and trust with an audience ("ethos"). Audience members will know from the beginning that you are a reasonable writer, and they will trust your argument as a result. For example, in the following concessionary statement, the writer advocates for stricter gun control laws, but she admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

Although tougher gun control laws are a powerful first step in decreasing violence in our streets, such legislation alone cannot end these problems since guns are not the only problem we face.

Such a concession will be welcome by those who might disagree with this writer's argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be realistic in their goals and humble in their approach to get readers to listen to their ideas. See Table of Phrases of Concession for some useful phrases of concession.

Table of Phrases of Concession

although	granted that
of course	still
though	yet

Bias in Writing



Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have a bias toward listening to music radio stations rather than talk radio or news programs. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view. The ideal in persuasive writing is to let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and a respectful and reasonable address of opposing sides.

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you will put forth and the better the final product will be.

The weakness of bias is when the bias begins to take over the essay when, for example, you neglect opposing ideas, exaggerate your points, or repeatedly insert yourself ahead of the subject by using I too often. Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.

The Use of "I" in Writing

The use of "I" in writing is a topic of debate, and the acceptance of its usage varies from instructor to instructor. It is difficult to predict the preferences for all your present and future instructors, but consider the effects it can potentially have on your writing. Be mindful of the use of "I" in your writing because it can make your argument sound overly biased. There are two primary reasons:

1. Excessive repetition of any word will eventually catch the reader's attention--and usually not in a good way. The use of "I" is no different.
2. The insertion of "I" into a sentence alters not only the way a sentence might sound but also the composition of the sentence itself. "I" is often the subject of a sentence. If the subject of the essay is supposed to be, say, smoking, then by inserting yourself into the sentence, you are effectively displacing the subject of the essay into a secondary position. In the following example, the subject of the sentence is underlined:

<u>Smoking</u> is bad.	<u>I</u> think smoking is bad.
In this sentence, the rightful subject, <i>smoking</i> , is in the subject position in the sentence.	In this sentence, the insertion of "I think" replaces smoking as the subject, which draws attention to I and away from the topic that is supposed to be discussed.

Remember to keep the message (the subject) and the messenger (the writer) separate. Indeed, your argument will be stronger if you remove the I think and simply assert "Smoking is bad." For more information about pronoun focus in an essay see Chapter 1 Introduction to Writing.

Facts and Opinions



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

Opinions are personal views, or judgments. An opinion is what an individual believes about a particular subject. However, an opinion in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion.

Consider the credibility of expert opinions. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience; this credibility is sometimes called "ethos" and is one way that we make our arguments persuasive.

For example, you seek the opinion of your dentist when it comes to the health of your gums, and you seek the opinion of your mechanic when it comes to the maintenance of your car. Both have knowledge and credentials in those respective fields, which is why their opinions matter to you. But the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should he or she offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa.

In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions. Relying on one or the other will likely lose more of your audience than it gains.

Using Visual Elements to Strengthen Arguments



Adding visual elements to a persuasive argument can often strengthen its persuasive effect. There are two main types of visual elements: quantitative visuals and qualitative visuals.

Quantitative visuals present data graphically. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience.

An appeal based on logic is called "logos," and it persuades the reader using reasoning. Often we can provide information in data form to persuade the reader through logic.

Quantitative visuals help display the information clearly. For example, sometimes it is easier to understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, and line graphs are all ways of presenting quantitative data in spatial dimensions.

Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions. Persuading your reader based on an emotional appeal is called "pathos." Photographs and pictorial images are examples of qualitative visuals that can create an emotional appeal. Such images often try to convey a story, and seeing an actual example can carry more power than hearing or reading about the example. For example, one image of a child suffering from malnutrition will likely have more of an emotional impact than pages dedicated to describing that same condition in writing.



You will find that many of the rhetorical devices used in writing are the same ones used in the workplace. When making a business presentation, you typically have limited time to get across your idea. Providing visual elements for your audience can be an effective time-saving tool. Quantitative visuals in business presentations serve the same purpose as they do in persuasive writing. They should make logical appeals by showing numerical data in a spatial design. Qualitative visuals should be pictures that might appeal to your audience's emotions.

Writing a Persuasive Essay



Choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, approach the subject from an angle that interests you. Begin your essay with an engaging introduction. Your thesis should typically appear somewhere in your introduction. Be sure to have a clear thesis that states your position and previews the main points your essay will address.

Start by acknowledging and explaining points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. Also state the limits of your argument. This too helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.

Make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated. See Chapters 1 and 4 for information on how to correctly incorporate outside sources into your writing.

Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice.

Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis.

Key Takeaways

Does my essay contain the following elements?

- An engaging introduction
- A reasonable, specific thesis that is able to be supported by evidence
- A varied range of evidence from credible sources
- Respectful acknowledgement and explanation of opposing ideas
- A style and tone of language that is appropriate for the subject and audience
- Acknowledgement of the argument's limits
- A conclusion that will adequately summarize the essay and reinforce the thesis

Sample Persuasive Essay



In this student paper, the student makes a persuasive case for the value of technical high schools in Georgia. As you read, pay attention to the different persuasive devices the writer uses to convince us of her position. Also note how the outline gives a structure to the paper that helps lead the reader step-by-step through the components of the argument.

Outline

Elizabeth Lamoureux
Dr. X
English 1101 Honors
April 25, 2019

Outline

Thesis: Technical high schools should be established in every county in Georgia because they can provide the technical training that companies need, can get young people into the workforce earlier, and can reduce the number of drop outs.

- I. Technical high schools can provide the technical training that companies in Georgia need.
 - A. Businesses can provide input regarding jobs needed in specific technical fields.
 - 1. Education can focus on these specific technical fields.
 - 2. Education can work with business to fill these positions.
 - B. Businesses can provide apprenticeship programs.
 - 1. Apprenticeship programs can be a vital part of a student's education.
 - 2. Apprenticeship programs are integral to Germany's educational program, providing a realistic model for technical high schools in Georgia.
- II. Technical high schools can prepare students to enter the workforce earlier.
 - A. Students not interested in college can enter the workforce upon high school graduation.
 - 1. Students train during their high school years for their chosen profession.
 - 2. Students begin to work in a profession or trade where there is a need.
 - B. Students can begin to earn a living upon graduation.
 - 1. Students will become independent and self-supporting at the age of eighteen when many of their peers are still dependent upon their parents.
 - 2. Students can make more money over the course of their lifetimes.
- III. Technical high schools can reduce the number of drop outs.
 - A. Students would stay in school because they take courses that they enjoy.
 - 1. Students are more motivated to take courses in which they have an interest.

2. Students will find both core and specialized classes more interesting and valuable when they can see the practical application of the subjects.
- B. Students would no longer need to drop out to support their families.
 1. Students would be able to earn a living wage while still taking classes that would eventually lead to full-time employment.
 2. Students would learn financial skills through experience with money management.

Student Essay

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April 25, 2019

The Value of Technical High Schools in Georgia's Business Marketplace

Businesses need specialized workers; young people need jobs. It seems like this would be an easy problem to solve. However, business and education are not communicating with each other. To add to this dilemma, emphasis is still put on a college education for everyone. Samuel Halperin, study director of the Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship for the W. T. Grant Foundation, co-authored two reports: "The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America" and "The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families." Halperin states: "While the attention of the nation was focused on kids going to college . . . the truth is that 70 percent of our adults never earn a college degree" (qtd. in Rogers). According to an article in Issues in Science and Technology, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that there will be more need for skills obtained through "community colleges, occupational training, and work experience" (Lerman). As Anne C. Lewis points out, although the poor job situation is recognized as detrimental to American youth, President Bush tried to get rid of career and technical education (CTE) and "promote strictly academic programs." Luckily, Congress did not support it (Lewis 5). The figure for U.S. teen joblessness in October 2009 was 27.6 percent, the highest since World War II (Karaim). According to Thomas E. Persing, Americans are "disregarding the 50 percent who enter college and fail to graduate. . . ." Since everyone does not want or need to go to college, young people need an alternative choice, namely, technical high schools. Technical high schools should be established in every county in Georgia because they can provide the technical training that companies need, can get young people into the work force earlier, and can reduce the number of drop outs.

Technical high schools provide students with the technical training that companies need. By getting input from businesses on exactly what their specialized needs are, school systems could adapt their curricula to accommodate the needs of businesses. According to an article in Issues in Science and Technology, "employers report difficulty in recruiting workers with adequate skills." The article goes on to say that "the shortage of available skills is affecting their ability to serve customers, and 84% of the firms say that the K-12 school system is not doing a good job preparing students for the workplace" (Lerman). Education can work with businesses to provide them with the workforce they need, and students can learn the skills they need through apprenticeship programs.

Business can be further involved by providing these apprenticeship programs, which can be a vital part of a student's education. Currently, Robert Reich, economist and former Secretary of Labor, and Richard Riley, Secretary of Education, have spoken up for apprenticeship programs (Persing). In these programs, not only do students learn job-specific skills, but they also learn other skills for success in the work place, such as "communication, responsibility, teamwork, allocating resources, problem-solving, and finding information" (Lerman). Businesses complain that the current educational system is failing in this regard and that students enter the workforce without these skills.

The United States could learn from other countries. Apprenticeship programs are integral to Germany's educational program, for example. Because such large numbers of students in a wide array of fields take advantage of these programs, the stigma of not attending college is reduced. Timothy Taylor, the Conversable Economist, explains that most German students complete this program and still have the option to pursue a post-secondary degree. Many occupations are represented in this program, including engineering, nursing, and teaching. Apprenticeship programs can last from one to six years and provide students with a wage for learning. This allows both business and student to compete in the market place. According to Julie Rawe, "under

Germany's earn-while-you-learn system, companies are paying 1.6 million young adults to train for about 350 types of jobs. . . ."

A second important reason technical high schools should be promoted in Georgia is that they prepare students to enter the work force earlier. Students not interested in college enter the work force upon high school graduation or sooner if they have participated in an apprenticeship or other cooperative program with a business. Students train during their high school years for their chosen profession and often work for the company where they trained. This ensures that students begin to work in a profession or trade where there is a need.

Another positive factor is that jobs allow students to earn a living upon graduation or before. Even though students are considered adults at eighteen, many cannot support themselves. The jobs available to young people are primarily minimum wage jobs which do not provide them with enough resources to live independently. One recent study indicates that the income gap is widening for young people, and In March 1997, more than one-fourth of out-of-school young adults who were working full-time were earning less than the poverty line income standard of just over \$16,000 annually for a family of four" ("The Forgotten Half Revisited"). Conversely, by entering the work force earlier with the skills businesses need, young people make more money over their lifetimes. Robert I. Lerman considers the advantages:

Studies generally find that education programs with close links to the world of work improve earnings. The earnings gains are especially solid for students unlikely to attend or complete college. Cooperative education, school enterprises, and internship or apprenticeship increased employment and lowered the share of young men who are idle after high school. Young people can obviously profit from entering the work force earlier.

One of the major benefits of promoting technical high schools in Georgia is that they reduce the number of dropouts. According to an article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the figure for dropouts for the Atlanta metro area is about thirty-four percent (McCaffrey and Badertscher A16). The statistic for Germany's dropout rate is less than nine percent (Rawe). As Rawe maintains, students stay in school because they cannot get the job if they do not have the diploma. Beyond the strong incentive of a job, students are more motivated to take courses in which they have an interest. In addition to the specialized career classes, students are still required to take core classes required by traditional high schools. However, practical application of these subjects makes them more interesting and more valuable to the students.

Another reason students drop out is to support their families. By participating in a program in which they are paid a wage and then entering that job full time, they no longer need to drop out for this reason. It is necessary for many students to contribute financially to the family: by getting a job earlier, they can do this. Joining the work force early also provides students with financial skills gained through experience with money management.

The belief of most Americans that everyone needs to have a college education is outdated. The United States needs skilled employees at all levels, from the highly technical to the practical day to day services society needs to sustain its current standard of living. Germany is doing this through its apprenticeship programs which have proven to be economically successful for both businesses and workers. If the State of Georgia put technical high schools in every county, businesses would get employees with the skills they need; young people would get into good paying jobs earlier, and schools would have fewer dropouts.

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Online Persuasive Essay Alternatives

**Note: Links to these articles may change or break. However, access to them may be free of charge if accessed through your college/university library database.*

Martin Luther King, Jr. writes persuasively about civil disobedience in this letter published in the Atlantic, "[Letter from Birmingham Jail](#)"

Michael Levin argues "[The Case for Torture](#)."

Alisa Solomon argues in this article in the Village Voice, "[The Case Against Torture](#)"

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Composing a Research Project

- [5.1: The Purpose of Research Writing](#)
- [5.2: Choosing Your Topic](#)
- [5.3: Applying Your Research](#)
- [5.4: Gathering Your Sources](#)
- [5.5: Documenting Your Source Material](#)
- [5.6: Revising Your Draft](#)
- [5.7: Digital Research Projects](#)

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5.1: The Purpose of Research Writing

The Purpose of Research Writing



- Who has written poetry about exile?
- What roles did women play in the American Revolution?
- Where do cicadas go during their off years?
- Should big-time college athletes be paid?
- When did bookmakers start using movable type?
- Why was the Great Wall of China built?
- How does the human brain create, store, and retrieve memories?

You may know the answers to these questions off the top of your head. If you are like most people, however, you find answers to tough questions like these by searching the Internet, visiting a library, or asking others for information. To put it simply, you perform research.

Whether or not you realize it, you probably already perform research in your everyday life.

When your boss, your instructor, or a family member asks you a question that you don't know the answer to, you locate relevant information, analyze your findings, and share your results. Locating, analyzing, and sharing information are key steps in the research process. In this chapter, you will learn more about each step. By developing your research writing skills, you will prepare yourself to answer challenging questions.

Sometimes you perform research simply to satisfy your own curiosity. Once you find the answer to your research question, your search may be over, or it may lead to more in-depth research about that topic or about another topic.

Other times, you want to communicate what you have learned to your peers, your family, your teachers, or even the editors of magazines, newspapers, or journals. In your personal life, you might simply discuss the topic with your friends. In more formal situations, such as in business and school, you communicate your findings in writing or in a presentation.

There are differences between a report and research:

Report	Research
A report relays the results of your research in an organized manner. A report is written from the perspective of someone who already knows the answers.	A research project presents a research question and answers that question through sources. It is written from the perspective of someone who seeks answers.

A report may simply relay the results of your research in an organized manner. In contrast, a research project presents a research question and answers that question through the sources which led you to that answer.

In a research paper, you use facts, interpretations, and opinions you encounter in your research to create a narrative and support an argument (an answer to your research question) about your topic.

A student in an art history course might write a research paper about an artist's work or an aesthetic movement. A student in a psychology course might present on findings about current research in childhood development.

No matter what field of study you pursue, you will most likely be asked to compose a research project in your college degree program and to apply the skills of research and writing in your career. For similar reasons as professionals, students do research to answer specific questions, to share their findings with others, to increase their understanding of challenging topics, and to strengthen their analytical skills.

Having to complete a research project may feel intimidating at first. After all, researching and composing a large project requires a lot of time, effort, and organization. However, its challenges have rewards. The research process allows you to gain expertise on a topic of your choice.

The writing process helps you to remember what you learned, to understand it on a deeper level, and to develop expertise. Thus writing a research paper can be a great opportunity to explore a question and topic that particularly interests you and to grow as a person.



Knowing how to compose a good research project is a valuable skill that will serve you well throughout your career. For example, laboratory technicians and information technology professionals do research to learn about the latest technological developments in their fields. A small business owner may conduct research to learn about the latest trends in his or her industry. A freelance writer will need to research his or her topics to write informed, up-to-date articles. Whether you are developing a new product, studying the best way to perform a procedure, discovering the challenges and opportunities in your field of employment, or learning about how to find a job, you will use research techniques to guide your exploration. Because effective communication is essential to any company, employers seek to hire people who can write clearly and professionally.

Exercise: Free Writing about Research



1. Identify the job of your dreams.
2. Now, freewrite about ways in which strong researching, organizing, writing, and critical thinking skills could help you succeed at your dream job.
3. Finally, share some of your ideas with a partner or in class discussion. Are there more ways to apply research to that job than you had thought of initially?

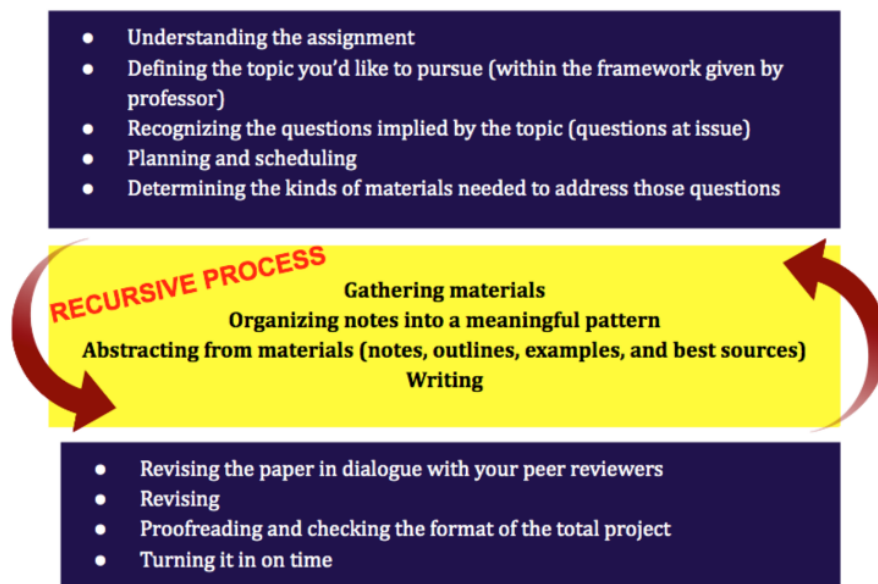
Process Overview



How does a research paper grow from a folder of notes to a polished final draft? No two projects are identical, and no two paths to completion are identical. That said, most research projects go through a set of stages, often repeating stages such as prewriting, drafting, writing from sources, and revising, in a recursive pattern.

Here is an example of what that pattern often looks like in a real-life research project, with the stages described in detail the infographic below:

The Recursive Process



You probably noticed that the process started repeating and fell out of order, right? Well, that's research (and writing in general)! It's a messy, sometimes confusing, but almost always rewarding journey, and if you dive into the process with an open mind, you'll probably end up with some great and interesting results.

Defining a Topic

Depending on your specific professor's assignment directions, you may get to choose your topic completely, you may get to choose a topic within a frame, or you may get to choose a topic from a list provided by the professor.

To narrow the focus of your topic, brainstorm using prewriting techniques, as well as any guidance or texts given by your instructor. Once you're sure of your topic, formulate a specific research question (a broad, open-ended question) or set of questions

that will guide your research. Your research will help you answer the question or answer another question that you realize is more interesting or useful.

Planning and Scheduling

Before you start researching your topic, take time to plan your researching and writing schedule. Research projects can take days, weeks, or even months to complete. Creating a schedule is a good way to ensure that you do not end up being overwhelmed by all the work you have to do as the deadline approaches.

During this step of the process, it is also a good idea to plan the resources and organizational tools you will use to keep yourself on track throughout the project. Flowcharts, calendars, and checklists can all help you stick to your schedule.

Conducting Research: Determining and Gathering the Right Kinds of Research

When going about your research, you will likely use a variety of sources, anything from books and periodicals to video presentations and in-person interviews. However, you should pay close attention to instructions; instructors often specify what kinds of sources they require for research papers.

Many will instruct you to only use academic / scholarly (peer-reviewed) sources, as those are the sources most valued in academia. For some assignments, your sources might include primary, secondary, and tertiary sources.

1. **Primary sources** provide firsthand information or raw data. For example, surveys, in-person interviews, historical documents, works of art, and works of literature are primary sources.
2. **Secondary sources** -- such as biographies, literary reviews, or news articles--include some analysis or interpretation of the information presented.
3. **Tertiary sources**--such as dictionaries, sourcebooks, encyclopedias, and some textbooks--repackage, reorganize, abstract, or compile information. They are usually not referenced to a specific author.

As you conduct research, you should take detailed, careful notes about your discoveries. This is writing, and it's an important part of the process, even if it's just notes at this point. Remember: you understand what you're reading by engaging with the material. You need to read predatorily and take notes strategically. You should also evaluate the reliability of each source you find, especially sources that are not peer-reviewed. Just because it exists doesn't mean it's a good source.

Organizing Your Research and Ideas, Abstracting From Materials, Writing

As you're beginning to learn about your topic, you'll likely feel overwhelmed by all of the information. That's normal. Here is what will help: writing as you're researching. This doesn't have to be polished writing. What's important is that you write throughout the process, constantly cycling through the recursive process.

When your research is complete, you will therefore have more material than you need, and you'll then be able to organize your findings and decide which sources to cite in your paper. You will also have an opportunity to evaluate the evidence you have collected and determine whether it supports your thesis, or the focus of your paper.

You may decide to adjust your thesis or conduct additional research to ensure that your thesis is well supported. The steps of a research project often overlap and repeat. They are not sequential or separate from each other.

Drafting Your Project

Now you are ready to compile your research findings, your notes, and other research with your critical analysis of the results in a first rough draft. This will likely be a messy draft, and that's OK.

The idea at this stage is to start to draw all of your thoughts and new-found expertise into a somewhat cohesive whole. You can always revise later. Your goal in almost any research project is to find out the answer to your research question. You will incorporate source materials into your paper and discuss each source thoughtfully in relation to your thesis (the answer to that question) or purpose statement.

It is important to pay close attention to standard conventions for citing sources in order to avoid plagiarism, which is the practice of using someone else's words without acknowledging the source. Later in this chapter, you will learn how to incorporate sources in your project and avoid some of the most common pitfalls of attributing information.

Revising and Editing Your Project

If you commit to the process of drafting a little every day and drafting as you research, you'll find that the project will get less messy as you begin to understand how the new information you know helps you understand the topic and your questions about it.

You might reorganize your paper's structure or revise for unity and cohesion, ensuring that each element in your paper smoothly and logically flows into the next. You will also make sure that your paper uses an appropriate and consistent tone.

Once you feel confident in the strength of your writing, you will edit your paper for proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and formatting.

When you complete this final step, you will have transformed a simple idea or question into a thoroughly researched and well-written project of which you can be proud.

A Final Note

Writing a good research project takes time, thought, and effort. Although this assignment is challenging, it is manageable if you commit to the process: write to understand what you want to know (answer your research questions), write as you learn more (understand your research), and write to share what you know (share that expertise with your audience). This will help you develop a thoughtful, informative, well-supported research project.

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5.2: Choosing Your Topic

Choosing Your Topic



Your first step is to establish a point of departure for your research project. Depending on your specific professor's assignment directions, you may get to choose your topic completely, you may get to choose a topic within a frame, or you may get to choose a topic from a list provided by the professor.

- To narrow the focus of your topic, brainstorm using prewriting techniques, as well as any guidance or texts given by your instructor.
- Once you're sure of your topic, formulate a specific research question (a broad, open-ended question) that will guide your research.

Your research will help you answer that question or answer another question that you realize is more interesting or useful. It's important to set aside adequate time for this part of the process. Fully exploring ideas will help you build a solid foundation for your paper.

Identifying Potential Topics

When you choose a research topic and a question about that topic, you are making a major commitment. Your choice will help determine whether you enjoy the lengthy process of research and writing and whether your final paper fulfills the assignment requirements. If you choose your topic hastily, you may later find it difficult to work with your topic. By taking your time and choosing carefully, you can ensure that this assignment is not only challenging but also rewarding.

Writers understand the importance of choosing a topic that fulfills the assignment requirements and fits the assignment's purpose and audience. Choosing a topic that genuinely interests you is also crucial. Your instructor may provide a list of suggested topics, a category of topics, or ask you to develop a topic on your own.

You may find inspiration for topic ideas in your everyday life, by browsing magazines, or looking at lists of topics or themes in online databases such as *Academic Search Premier*, *Opposing Viewpoints*, *CQ Researcher Online*, *Bloom's Literary Reference Online*, and *Literature Resource Center*.



In addition to Prewriting, use free online tools such as [Topic-o-rama](#) and [Wridea](#), to help you brainstorm your topic.

You may benefit from identifying several possibilities before committing to one idea. Building a list of potential topics will help you to identify additional, related topics.

In this chapter, you will follow a writer named Jorge, who is in a class studying conflicts in American Higher Education, as he prepares a research paper.

Jorge was assigned to write a research paper on current debates about college in the U.S.:

Assignment: Write a 5-6 page research paper on current debates about college in the United States.

Within this framework, Jorge had to decide which specific issues interested him. He brainstormed the following list of possibilities:

- College sports
- Tuition
- Free Speech on campus
- Campus safety
- Campus tech fees
- State funding for higher ed
- Financial aid
- Digital classrooms
- Prescription drug use by students
- Alcohol and college students
- Fraternities and Sororities
- Student activity fees

Focusing on a Topic

After identifying potential topics, Jorge needed to evaluate his list and choose one topic to pursue as the focus of his research paper. Once he had a narrow enough topic, his next step is to develop a research question about that topic. Discussing his ideas with his instructor, peers, and tutors will help ensure that he chooses a manageable topic that fits the requirements of the assignment. The following were some questions Jorge considered:

- Will I be able to find enough information about the topic?
- Can I take an arguable position on the topic?
- Is the topic too broad or too narrow for the scope of the assignment? If so, can I modify the topic so it is more manageable?

He needed to narrow his topic so he could formulate a concise, manageable question about it.

Most writers find that the topics they listed during brainstorming or idea mapping are too broad for the scope of the assignment. Working with an overly broad topic, such as "financial aid," can be frustrating and overwhelming.

Each topic has so many facets that it would be impossible to cover them all in a college research paper. However, more specific choices, such as "the pros and cons of sexual education," "children's television programs," or "the physical effects of the South Beach diet," are specific enough to write about without being so narrow that they can't sustain an entire research paper.

A good research paper provides focused, in-depth information and analysis. If your topic is too broad, you will find it difficult to do more than skim the surface when you research it and write about it. To narrow your focus, explore your topic in writing. Also, conduct preliminary research, including discussing the topic with others. Keep in mind that you will have to narrow your search.

You may be asking yourself, "How am I supposed to narrow my topic when I haven't even begun researching yet?" In fact, you may already know more than you realize.

Review your list and identify your top two or three topics. Set aside some time to explore each one through Prewriting Techniques. Taking the time to focus on your topic may yield fresh angles.

For example, Jorge knew that he was especially interested in the topic of "college athletics," but he also knew that it was much too broad for his assignment. He used freewriting to explore his thoughts so he could narrow his topic.

Read Jorge's ideas from his freewriting:

I wonder if college athletes should get paid. I've been thinking a lot about the article we read in class: "Get Your Stadiums Out of Our Churches," & how universities spend millions of dollars for sports (mostly basketball and football) and make money out of it. However, for the universities and colleges to make that money, they make players play without even paying them. This is a huge problem because only 1 percent of football players make it to NFL. All the other 99 percent just wasted their energy and time for nothing.

I am a huge fan of college sports. I still watch it while hating that players are not being paid. I have a debate with my friends always about college sports. Most of the people I know said that college players are being paid by getting free learning in the university they are playing for. But I'm not sure that they're actually getting that education--there was that program (I think in North Carolina?) where players were getting fake class grades in Swahili and other stuff so that their GPA can go up. I think Joe Nocera wrote about this. The problem is that, the universities are giving students and empty grade and calling it an education. This is really messed up because college is where people know things or many students are mature and know things. However, when it comes to football, everyone looks the other way as if they don't know what was happening.

I love college football and basketball, but now I am starting to hate the game because of what the universities are doing. The universities even own players and make money out of them and don't give them anything. But is paying them the answer? What would that even look like? Would they still get a degree?

Conducting Preliminary Research

Conducting preliminary research can happen a few different ways. Talk about your ideas with your classmates, friends, and family. Exploratory reading can help you identify interesting angles.

Surfing the web is a good way to start, as is finding sources that your class texts refer to (as Jorge did). Find out what people are saying about your topic in online newspapers, magazines, blogs, and discussion boards. Keep in mind that the reliability of online sources varies greatly.

In this exploratory phase of your research, you do not need to evaluate sources as closely as you will later; however, use common sense as you refine your paper topic. If you read a fascinating blog comment that gives you a new idea, search for some fully developed sources on that topic to see if it's worth pursuing.

If you are writing a research paper for a specialized course, look back through your notes and course activities to identify potential topics. Remind yourself of reading assignments and class discussions that especially engaged you. Doing so can help you identify topics to pursue. If the readings or viewings assigned in your course deal with your topic, then review and take notes on those materials.

Librarians and instructors can help you to determine if there are enough sources available on your topic, or if there are so many sources that it would be wise to narrow your topic further.

Jorge's freewriting exercise helped him realize that the assigned topic of current debates in higher education intersected with a few of his own interests: sports, education, and justice.

Preliminary online research and discussions with his classmates strengthened his impression that many people are confused or misled by media coverage of these subjects. Jorge decided to focus his paper on a topic that seemed to be gaining attention: whether universities should be paying their athletes, and how that could happen. He wanted to find out more.



At work, you may need to research a topic quickly to find general information. This information can be useful in understanding trends in a given industry or generating competition. For example, a company may research a competitor's prices and use the information when pricing their own product. You may find it useful to skim a variety of sources and take notes on your findings.

Exercise: Choosing a Topic



Step 1

Set a timer for five minutes. Use prewriting to create a list of topics you would be interested in researching for a paper about the influence of the Internet on social networking. Which social networking sites do you and your friends use? Do you closely follow a particular social media website, such as Twitter? Would you like to learn more about a certain industry, such as online dating? Would you like to learn more about people's use of the Internet to build support for social causes? List as many ideas related to this topic as you can.

Step 2

Choose two topics from the list you created. Spend five minutes freewriting about each of these topics. Choose the topic you most enjoyed freewriting about. Then, review your freewriting to identify possible areas of focus.

Step 3

Swap lists of potential topics with a classmate. Select one or two topics on your classmate's list about which you would like to learn more. Explain to your classmate why you find those topics interesting. Ask your classmate which of the topics on your list s/he would like to learn more about and why.

Determining Paths of Inquiry



Your freewriting and preliminary research have helped you choose a focused, manageable topic for your research paper. To work with your topic successfully, you will need to determine what exactly you want to learn about it and what you want to say about it. Before you begin conducting in-depth research, you will further define your focus by developing a research question.

By forming research questions about your topic, you are setting a goal for your research. Determine your main question, the primary focus of your paper, and several subquestions that you will need to research in more depth to answer your main question. Your main research question should be substantial enough to form the guiding principle of your paper, but focused enough to guide your research.

A strong research question requires you not only to find information but also to put together different pieces of information, interpret and analyze them, and figure out what that body of knowledge--your sources--says is the answer.

As you consider potential research questions, ask yourself whether they would be too hard or too easy to answer. Review the results of your prewriting, and skim through your preliminary research. From these, write both simple, factual questions and more complex questions that would require analysis and interpretation to answer.

Below are the research questions Jorge will use to focus his research. Notice that his main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. Jorge will need to research his subquestions, which address narrower topics, to answer his main question.

Topic: College athletes

Main question: Should colleges and universities pay college athletes?

Subquestions:

- What are the justifications for not paying them?
- What is the history of college sports?
- How did this system evolve?
- What do the athletes say?
- Have there been any recent court cases dealing with this?
- Who is on what side?
- How would paying them work?



Before you begin a new project at work, you may have to develop a project summary document that states the purpose of the project, explains why it would be a wise use of company resources, and briefly outlines the steps involved in completing the project. This type of document is similar to a research proposal for an academic purpose.

Both define and limit a project, explain its value, discuss how to proceed, and identify what resources you will use.

Managing Your Research



Choosing a Topic helped you begin to plan the content of your research paper: your topic and the research question. It is equally important to plan out the process of researching and composing the project. Although some types of writing assignments can be completed relatively quickly, developing a good research paper is a complex process that takes time and attention. Careful planning helps ensure that you will keep your project running smoothly and produce your best work. Think about how you will complete each step and what resources you will use. Resources may include anything from online databases and digital technologies to interview subjects and writing tutors.

Scheduling Research and Writing

Set up a project schedule that shows when you will complete each step. To develop your schedule, use a calendar and work backward from the date your final draft is due.

Generally, it is wise to divide half of the available time on the research phase of the project and half on the writing phase, keeping in mind that you should be writing as you're researching (notes and engaging with the material) and that as you begin to bring those notes into a draft, you may have to do more research as you discover more.

If you have a month to work, plan for two weeks for each phase. If you have a full semester, plan to begin research early and to start writing by the middle of the term. You might think that no one really works that far ahead, but try it. You will probably be pleased with the quality of your work and with the reduction in your stress level.

Plan your schedule realistically, and consider other commitments that may sometimes take precedence. A business trip or family visit may mean that you are unable to work on the research project for a few days. Make the most of the time you have available.

Plan for unexpected interruptions, but keep in mind that a short time away from the project may help you come back to it with renewed enthusiasm. Another strategy many writers find helpful is to finish each day's work at a point when the next task is an easy one. That makes it easier to start again. Also, consider keeping a writing log, where at the end of each work session, you list the work you did that day or that session and what you plan to do next time you sit down to work on the project.

As you plan, break down major steps into smaller tasks if necessary. For example, conducting research, involves locating potential sources, evaluating their usefulness and reliability, reading, and taking notes. Defining these smaller tasks makes the project more manageable by giving you concrete goals to achieve.

Jorge's Research Paper

Jorge had six weeks to complete his research project. Working backward from a due date of May 2, he mapped out a schedule for completing his research by early April so that he would have ample time to write:

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
March 20	21	22 Choose Topic	23 Preliminary research	24 Write research questions and working thesis	25 Write research proposal	26
27	28 Research proposal due	29 Look for sources online	30 Library	31 Evaluate sources; make source cards	April 1 Take notes	2
3	4	5 Finish note cards	6 Organize notes	7	8 Write outline	9
10	11 Outline due	12 Write draft	13	14	15 <i>Off - Trip to NYC</i>	16 <i>Off - Trip to NYC</i>
17	18 Conference with Prof. Habib 2:00	19 Finish writing draft	20	21 Revise draft	22	23 Library?
24	25	26 Finish revising draft	27 Edit draft	28 Writing Center 4:30	29 Finish editing draft	30 Create Works Cited page
May 1	2 Final draft due	3	4	5	6	7

Jorge chose to write his schedule in his weekly planner to help keep himself on track. Review Jorge's schedule. Key target dates are shaded. Note that Jorge planned times to use available resources by visiting the library and writing center and by meeting with his

instructor.



Email systems usually include a calendar feature where you can record tasks, arrange to receive daily reminders, and check off completed tasks. Electronic devices such as smartphones have similar features. There are online task-management and productivity tools you may use for free on the Web.

Sample Schedule for Writing a Research Paper

Staying Organized

Although setting up a schedule is relatively easy, sticking to one is challenging. Even if you are the rare person who never procrastinates, unforeseen events may interfere with your ability to complete tasks on time. A self-imposed deadline may slip your mind despite your best intentions.

Organizational tools (e.g., calendars, checklists, note cards, software) and setting up a buddy system with a classmate can help you stay on track.

Throughout your project, organize both your time and resources systematically. Review your schedule frequently and check your progress. It helps to post your schedule in a place where you will see it every day.

Some people enjoy using the most up-to-date technology to help them stay organized. Other people prefer simple methods, such as crossing off items on a checklist. The key to staying organized is finding a system you like enough to use daily. The particulars of the method are not important as long as you are consistent.

Organize project documents in a binder or digital folder. Label these clearly. Use note cards, an electronic document, an online database folder (this will require you to set up a free account on the database), or free downloadable software such as [Zotero](#) to record bibliographical information for sources you want to use in your paper. Tracking this information during the research process will save you time when Creating a List of References.



When you create a project schedule at work, you set target dates for completing certain tasks and identify the resources you plan to use on the project. It is important to build in some flexibility. Materials may not be received on time because of a shipping delay. An employee on your team may be called away to work on a higher-priority project. Essential equipment may malfunction. You should always plan for the unexpected.

Anticipating Challenges



Do any of these scenarios sound familiar? You have identified a book that would be a great resource for your project, but it is currently checked out of the library. You planned to interview a subject-matter expert on your topic, but she calls to cancel. You have begun writing your draft, but now you realize that you will need to modify your thesis and conduct additional research. Or, you have finally completed your draft when your computer crashes, and days of hard work disappear in an instant.

These troubling situations are all too common. No matter how carefully you plan your schedule, you may encounter a glitch or setback. Managing your project effectively means anticipating potential problems, taking steps to minimize them where possible, and allowing time in your schedule to handle any setbacks.

Many times a situation becomes a problem due only to lack of planning. For example, if a book is checked out of your college's library, you can request it through interlibrary loan to have it delivered to your campus in a few days. Alternatively, you might locate another, equally useful source. If you have allowed enough time for research, a brief delay will not become a major setback.

You can manage other potential problems by staying organized and maintaining a take-charge attitude.

Always back up your work in at least three places. Don't depend upon your original file. Backup your work



- on a portable flash drive
- by emailing it to yourself, and
- on cloud storage such as Dropbox or Google Drive.

Loosing your paper due to a computer problem is not an excuse. You must back up your work.

If you don't have a reliable Internet connection off campus, then visit a computer lab on campus or a public library with desktop computers, or you can go to a coffee shop with a laptop; it is important to find a space where you can concentrate and that is open during times that work with your schedule.

As you conduct research, maintain detailed records and notes of sources; doing so will make citing sources in your draft infinitely easier. If you run into difficulties with your research or your writing, ask your instructor or a librarian for help, or meet with a peer or writing tutor.



In the workplace, documents prepared at the beginning of a project often include a detailed plan for risk management. When you manage a project, it makes sense to anticipate and prepare for potential setbacks. For example, to roll out a new product line, a software development company must strive to complete tasks on a schedule in order to meet the new product release date. The project manager may need to adjust the project plan if one or more tasks fall behind schedule.

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5.3: Applying Your Research

Applying Your Research



At this point in your project, you are preparing to move from the research phase to the writing phase. You have gathered much of the information you will use, and soon you will be ready to begin writing your draft. This section helps you transition smoothly from one phase to the next. However, it's important to keep in mind that you should be writing as you're researching, and you may have to do more research as you get deeper into the writing phase.

Beginning writers sometimes attempt to transform a pile of notes into a formal research paper without any intermediary step. This approach presents problems. The writer's original question and thesis may be buried in a flood of disconnected details taken from researched sources. The first draft may present redundant or contradictory information. Worst of all, the writer's ideas and voice may be lost.

An effective research paper focuses on the writer's ideas from the question that sparked the research process to how the writer answers that question based on the research findings. Before beginning a draft, or even an outline, good writers pause and reflect. They ask themselves questions such as the following:

- How has my thinking changed based on my research? What have I learned?
- Was my working thesis on target? Do I need to rework my thesis based on what I have learned?
- How does the information in my sources mesh with my research questions and help me answer those questions?
- Have any additional important questions or subtopics come up that I will need to address in my paper?
- How do my sources complement each other? What ideas or facts recur in multiple sources?
- Where do my sources disagree with each other, and why?

In this section, you will reflect on your research and review the source material you have gathered. You will determine what you now think about your topic. You will synthesize, or put together, different pieces of information that help you answer your research questions. Finally, you will determine the organizational structure that works best for your paper and begin drafting. Some writers like to outline their papers before they get started writing, while others like to start writing and organize their writing after they get a good amount of material down. Both of these can work, although you'll probably want to ask your professor if you're required to turn in an outline at some point.

Selecting Useful Details

At this point in the research process, you have gathered evidence, ideas, and information from a wide variety of sources. Now it is time to think about how you will use your source materials as a writer. When you conduct research, you keep an open mind and seek out many promising sources. You take notes on any information that looks like it might help you answer your research questions.

Often, new ideas and terms come up in your reading, and these, too, find their way into your notes. You may record claims or examples that catch your attention and seem relevant to your research questions. By now, you have probably amassed an

impressively detailed collection of notes. However, you will not use all of your notes in your paper.

Effective writers are selective. They determine which information is most relevant and appropriate for their purpose. They include details that develop or explain their ideas, and they leave out details that do not. The writer, not the notes, is the controlling force. The writer shapes the content of the research paper.

While gathering sources, you used strategies to filter out irrelevant and unreliable sources and details. Now you will apply your critical-thinking skills to the details you recorded, analyzing how they are relevant, determining the ways in which they mesh with your ideas and form patterns.

One way to do this is to use the "source bricks" from chapter 1.3. Once you have a good number of source bricks from each source you'll probably use for your project, play with putting them in different orders or categories to see what they have in common and whether they differ. You could put them in columns by source and draw lines between the bricks with similar main ideas, or you could use an "idea map" website or app that helps you see a visualization of your main ideas and their relationships to each other. Give yourself the time to do this play and experimentation; give yourself the time to see where ideas are connecting across sources.

Jorge's Research Paper

As Jorge reviewed his research, he realized that some of the information was not especially useful for his purpose. His notes included several statements about the relationship of "farm teams" to the NCAA. While this is a related topic, Jorge realized that it was separate from where his research focused, which was on whether to pay college athletes. Jorge decided to cut this material.

Do not feel anxious if you still have trouble seeing the big picture. Systematically looking through your notes will help you. Begin by identifying the notes that clearly answer your research question. Mark or group these, either physically or using the cut-and-paste function in your word-processing program. Eventually, an answer to your research question (or the question you should have asked) will start to emerge. This answer becomes your thesis for the project.

As you identify the crucial details in the research that support your thesis, make sure you analyze them critically.

Ask the following questions to focus your thinking:

- Is this detail from a reliable, high-quality source? Is it appropriate for me to cite this source in an academic paper? The bulk of the support for your thesis should come from reliable, reputable sources. You've already thought about and made choices in the quality of sources you gathered earlier in the research process. If most of the details that support your thesis are from less-reliable sources, you may need to do additional research or modify your question and the thesis which answers that question.
- Is the link between this information and my thesis obvious, or will I need to explain it to my readers? Remember, you have spent more time thinking and reading about this topic than your audience. Some connections might be obvious to both you and your readers. More often, however, you will need to provide the analysis or explanation that shows how the information supports your thesis. As you read through your notes, jot down ideas you have for making those connections clear.
- What personal biases or experiences might affect the way I interpret this information? No researcher is 100 percent objective. We all have personal opinions and experiences that influence our reactions to what we read and learn. Good researchers are aware of this human tendency. They keep an open mind when they read opinions or facts that contradict their beliefs.

It can be tempting to ignore information that does not support your thesis or that contradicts it outright. However, such information is important. At the very least, it gives you a sense of what has been written about the topic. More importantly, it can help you question and refine your own thinking so that writing your research paper is a true learning process. Remember, your research question is not set in stone. You can and should change your question throughout the research writing process if the evidence you find tells you that a different question will lead you to more information or if a different question makes more sense.

If you find research that doesn't answer your question or seems to answer it differently than your other sources, you should carefully consider how information that challenges your thesis fits into the big picture of your research. It doesn't necessarily mean that you've got the completely wrong answer, but it may mean that you need to adjust the question or the answer slightly. You may decide that the source is unreliable or the information is irrelevant, or you may decide that it is an important point you need to bring up. What matters is that you give careful consideration to various perspectives and current research on the topic.

When you create workplace documents based on research, selectivity remains important. A project team may spend months conducting market surveys to prepare for rolling out a new product, but few managers have time to read the research in its



entirety. Most employees want the research distilled into a few well-supported points. Focused, concise writing is highly valued in the workplace.

Finding Connections between Sources

As you find connections between your ideas and information in your sources, also look for commonalities between your sources. Do most sources seem to agree on a particular idea? Are some facts mentioned repeatedly in many different sources? What key terms or major concepts come up in most of your sources regardless of whether the sources agree on the finer points? Identifying these connections will help you identify important ideas to discuss in your paper. Look for subtler ways your sources complement one another, too. Does one author refer to another's book or article? How do sources that are more recent build upon the ideas developed in earlier sources?

Be aware of any redundancies in your sources. If you have amassed solid support from a reputable source, such as a scholarly journal, there is no need to cite the same facts from an online encyclopedia article that is many steps removed from any primary research. If a given source adds nothing new to your discussion and you can cite a stronger source for the same information, use the stronger source.

Determine how you will address any contradictions found among different sources. For instance, if one source cites a startling fact that you cannot confirm anywhere else, it is safe to dismiss the information as unreliable. However, if you find significant disagreements among reliable sources, you will need to review them and evaluate each source. Which source presents a sounder argument or more solid evidence? It is up to you to determine which source is the most credible and why.

Review

Review your research questions and working thesis again. This time, keep them nearby as you review your research notes. Identify information that supports your working thesis. Identify details that call your thesis into question. Determine whether you need to modify your thesis. Use your research questions to identify key ideas in your paper. Begin categorizing your notes according to which topics are addressed. You may find yourself adding important topics or deleting unimportant ones as you proceed. Write out your revised thesis and at least two or three big ideas.

Synthesizing Source Material



By now, your ideas about your topic are taking shape. You have a sense of what major ideas to address in your paper, what points you can easily support, and what questions or subtopics might need a little more thought. In short, you have begun the process of synthesizing source material, that is, of putting the pieces together into a coherent whole.

It is normal to find this part of the process a little difficult. Some questions or concepts may still be unclear to you. You may not yet know how you will tie all of your research together. Synthesizing is a complex, demanding mental task, and even experienced researchers struggle with it at times. A little uncertainty is often a good sign. It means you are challenging yourself to work thoughtfully with your topic instead of simply restating the same information.

Analyze how your notes relate to your major research question and the subquestions you identified at the start of the research process. Organize your notes with headings that correspond to those questions. As you proceed, you might identify some important subtopics that were not part of your original plan, or you might decide that some questions are not relevant to your paper.

Categorize information carefully, and continue to think critically about the material. Ask yourself whether the connections between ideas are clear. Remember, your ideas and conclusions will shape the paper. They are the glue that holds the rest of the content together. As you work, begin jotting down the big ideas you will use to connect the dots for your reader. (If you are not sure where to begin, try answering your major research question and subquestions. Add and answer new questions as appropriate.) You might record these big ideas on paper sticky notes or type them into a word-processing document or other digital format.

Planning How to Organize Your Paper

You may be wondering how your ideas are supposed to shape the paper, especially since you are writing a research paper based on your research. Integrating your ideas and your information from research is a complex process, and sometimes it can be difficult to separate the two. Some paragraphs in your paper will consist mostly of details from your research. That is fine, as long as you explain what those details mean or how they are linked. You should also include sentences and transitions that show the relationship between different claims and evidence from your research by grouping related ideas or pointing out connections or contrasts. The result is that you are not simply presenting information; you are synthesizing, analyzing, and interpreting it. Your "source bricks" are a start, but you need to decide which ones go where, in what order, in what shape, and you have to create the language (or the mortar) that joins them together.

As you begin to draft, you'll probably find that a structure is starting to emerge--as you gain expertise in your topic, you're also learning how best to order that information. Eventually, you'll have to decide on an order, or organizational structure, and make it explicit. For some assignments, this may be determined by the instructor's requirements. For instance, if you are asked to explore the impact of a new communications device, a cause-and-effect structure is obviously appropriate. In other cases, you will need to determine the structure based on what suits your topic and purpose. For more information about the structures used in writing, see the chapter on Rhetorical Modes of Writing.

Jorge's Research Paper

As Jorge began to write, he didn't pay much attention to order until he got all of his ideas out on the page. He is the kind of writer who needs to write a "messy" draft first before he understands how to order the draft.

With that in mind, he planned the following outline.

- I. Introduction
 - A. Background
 - B. Thesis: Colleges Should Pay Their Student Athletes
 - C. Supporting arguments for thesis, i, ii, and iii
 - D. Body
- II. College sports are exploitative
 - A. Their labor is worth being paid
 - B. They have no contract and can be released for any reason
 - C. Injuries are not covered and can cause release from team
- III. Many student athletes don't get the education they're promised
 - A. Academic scandals
 - B. Hours per day outside of class
 - C. Athletic retention rates
- IV. Paying students will reduce the amount of fraudulent "back-door" payments and benefits
 - A. Food allowances aren't enough for athletes to get by
 - B. Apparel and other companies tempt athletes with money
 - C. They will be able to concentrate on the job instead of school
- V. Conclusion

A. How it could work



The structures described in this section and in the chapter on Rhetorical Modes can also help you organize information in different types of workplace documents. For instance, medical incident reports and police reports follow a chronological structure. If the company must choose between two vendors to provide a service, you might write an email to your supervisor comparing and contrasting the choices. Understanding when and how to use each organizational structure can help you write workplace documents efficiently and effectively.

Review

Review the organizational structures discussed in Rhetorical Modes. Working with the notes you organized earlier, follow these steps to begin planning how to organize your paper. Create an outline that includes your thesis, major subtopics, and supporting points. The major headings in your outline will become sections or paragraphs in your paper. Remember that your ideas should form the backbone of the paper. For each major section of your outline, write out a topic sentence stating the main point you will make in that section. You may find that some points are too complex to explain in a sentence. Consider whether any major sections of your outline need to be broken up, and jot down additional topic sentences as needed. Review your notes and determine how the different pieces of information fit into your outline as supporting points.

Exercise: Share Your Outline



At this point, you should have a well-developed working outline.

Collaborative exercise: Exchange outlines of your research paper with a classmate. Examine your classmate's outline to see if any questions come to mind and if you see any levels that would benefit from additional support, elaboration, or clarification. Return outlines to each other and compare observations.

Writing Your Draft



At last, you are ready to begin writing a draft of your research paper. Putting your thinking and research into words is exciting. It can also be challenging. In this section, you will learn strategies for drafting your research paper, such as integrating material from your sources, citing information correctly, and avoiding misuse of your sources.

Remember that you've already written a lot of material as you've been taking notes. In Section 4.6, "Applying Your Research," we discussed the idea of creating "source bricks" around important parts of your sources.

This "draft" is your first attempt to bring them together into a somewhat cohesive whole, into a structure that begins to make sense, just as if you were starting to put actual bricks together into a building. Writers often work out of sequence when writing a research paper. If you find yourself struggling to write an engaging introduction, you may wish to write the body of your paper first. Writing the body sections first will help you clarify your main points. Writing the introduction should then be easier. You will likely have a better sense of how to introduce the paper after you have drafted some or all of the body.

The Structure of a Research Paper

Research papers generally follow the same basic structure: an introduction that presents the writer's thesis; a body section that develops the thesis with supporting points and evidence; and a conclusion that revisits the thesis and provides additional insights or suggestions for further research.

Your writing voice will come across most strongly in your introduction and conclusion as you work to attract your readers' interest and establish your thesis. These sections usually do not cite sources at length. They focus on the big picture, not specific details. In contrast, the body of your paper will cite sources extensively. As you present your ideas, you will support your points with details from your research.

Writing Your Introduction

There are several approaches to writing an introduction, each of which fulfills the same goals. The introduction should get readers' attention, provide background information, and present the writer's thesis. Many writers like to begin with one of the following catchy openers:

- A surprising fact
- A thought-provoking question
- An attention-getting quote
- A brief anecdote that illustrates a larger concept
- A connection between your topic and your readers' experiences

The next few sentences place the opening in context by presenting background information. From there, the writer builds toward a thesis, which is sometimes at the end of the introduction and sometimes in the middle of the introduction, followed by a brief summary of the thesis' supporting arguments (the main reasons why or how the thesis is true). Think of your thesis as a signpost that lets readers know in what direction the paper is headed.

Jorge's Research Paper

Jorge decided to begin his research paper by connecting his topic to readers' potentially common assumptions. Read the first draft of his introduction. The thesis is in bold. Note how Jorge progresses from the opening sentences, to background information, to his thesis.

Introduction Draft

Paying NCAA Athletes: The Right Thing to Do

*"College athletics are rooted in the classical ideal of *Mens sana in corpore sano*—a sound mind in a sound body—and who would argue with that?" asks Taylor Branch in his essay, "The Shame of College Sports" (Branch 1). Taylor Branch references this time-honored ideal that to be mentally healthy one must put effort into the physical well being of their body. This ideal is the purpose for which college sports was founded. Unfortunately, the importance of the mind and its morality was drowned out by the want of profit. Thankfully in recent years many concerned individuals like Branch are bringing the many issues concerning college sports to public attention and suggesting their own solutions, including paying big-time college athletes.*

Universities that profit from their athletes should pay those athletes. These big-time sports are exploitative, too many student athletes do not get the education they are promised, and paying student athletes will reduce the amount of fraudulent "back-door" payments and benefits.

Writing a Draft

Draft the introductory paragraph of your research paper. Use one of the common techniques for writing an engaging introduction. Be sure to include background information about the topic that leads to your thesis.

Writing Your Conclusion



In your introduction, you tell readers where they are headed. In your conclusion, you recap where they have been. For this reason, some writers prefer to write their conclusions soon after they have written their introduction. However, this method may not work for all writers. Other writers prefer to write their conclusion at the end of the paper, after writing the body paragraphs. No process is absolutely right or absolutely wrong; find the one that best suits you.

No matter when you compose the conclusion, it should revisit your thesis and sum up your main ideas. The conclusion should not simply echo the introduction or rely on bland summary statements, such as "In this paper, I have demonstrated that." In fact, avoid repeating your thesis verbatim from the introduction. Restate it in different words that reflect the new perspective gained through your research. That helps keep your ideas fresh for your readers.

An effective writer might conclude a paper by asking a new question the research inspired, revisiting an anecdote presented earlier, or reminding readers of how the topic relates to their lives. Revisit the guidance provided about conclusions in Chapter 2.

Using Primary and Secondary Research

As you write your draft, be mindful of how you are using primary and secondary source material to support your points. Recall that primary sources present firsthand information. Secondary sources are one step removed from primary sources. They present analyses or interpretations of primary sources. How you balance primary and secondary source material in your paper will depend on the topic and assignment.

Some types of research papers must use primary sources extensively to achieve their purpose. Any paper that analyzes a primary text or presents the writer's own experimental research falls in this category. Here are a few examples:

- A paper for a literature course analyzing several poems by Emily Dickinson
- A paper for a political science course comparing televised speeches delivered by two presidential candidates
- A paper for a communications course discussing gender biases in television commercials
- A paper for a business administration course that discusses the results of a survey the writer conducted with local businesses to gather information about their work-from-home and flextime policies
- A paper for an elementary education course that discusses the results of an experiment the writer conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different methods of mathematics instruction

For these types of papers, primary research is the main focus. If you are writing about a work (including non-print works, such as a movie or a painting), it is crucial to gather information and ideas from the original work, rather than relying solely on others' interpretations. And, of course, if you take the time to design and conduct your own field research, such as a survey, a series of interviews, or an experiment, you will want to discuss it in detail. Interviews may provide interesting responses that you want to share with your readers.

Secondary Sources

Even if your paper is largely based on primary sources, you may use secondary sources to develop your ideas. For instance, an analysis of Alfred Hitchcock's films would focus on the films themselves as primary sources, but it might also cite commentary and interpretations by critics. A paper that presents an original experiment would include some discussion of similar prior research in the field.

For some assignments, it makes sense to rely more on secondary sources than primary sources. If you are not analyzing a text or conducting your own field research, then you will need to use secondary sources extensively. As much as possible, use secondary sources that are closely linked to primary research, such as a journal article that presents the results of the author's scientific study or a book that cites interviews and case studies. These sources are more reliable and add more value to your paper than sources that are further removed from primary research. For instance, a popular magazine article on junk-food addiction might be several steps removed from the original scientific study on which it is loosely based. As a result, the article may distort, sensationalize, or misinterpret the scientists' findings.

Jorge's Research Paper

Jorge knew he did not have the time, resources, or experience needed to conduct original experimental research for his paper. Because he was relying on secondary sources to support his ideas, he made a point of citing sources that were not far removed from primary research.

Incorporating Source Material into Your Body Paragraphs

One of the challenges of writing a research paper is successfully integrating your ideas with material from your sources. Your paper must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research, or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the right balance?

The introduction and conclusion function like the frame around a picture. They define and limit your topic and place your research in context. However, you may choose to wait to write your introduction and conclusion until after writing your body paragraphs, or "source bricks." Either way, as you draft your body paragraphs, you must express your critical thinking about the ideas and information that you incorporate from your sources. You must offer claims of your own that either challenge or extend points from your sources.

In the body paragraphs of your paper, you will need to integrate ideas carefully at the paragraph level and at the sentence level. Use topic sentences and concluding sentences of body paragraphs to make sure readers understand the significance of any facts, details, or points you cite. In particular, you must continually explain how source material relates to your thesis. Indicate your interpretation of, and attitude toward, source material within and between sentences in which you summarize, paraphrase, or quote material from your sources. You will also include sentences that transition between ideas from your research, either within a paragraph or from one paragraph to the next. At the sentence level, you will need to think carefully about how you introduce your summarized, paraphrased, and quoted material.

You have already learned about summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources when taking notes. Here, you will learn how to use these techniques in the body of your paper to weave in source material to develop your ideas.

Introducing Cited Material Effectively



Including a signal phrase in your text, such as "Jackson wrote" or "Copeland found," often helps you integrate source material smoothly. This citation technique also helps convey that you are actively engaged with your source material. Unfortunately, during the process of writing your research paper, it is easy to fall into a rut and use the same few dull verbs repeatedly, such as "Jones said," "Smith stated," and so on. Punch up your writing by using strong verbs that help your reader understand how the source material presents ideas. There is a world of difference between an author who "suggests" and one who "claims," one who "questions" and one who "criticizes." You do not need to consult your thesaurus every time you cite a source, but do think about which verbs will accurately represent the ideas and make your writing more engaging.

The following list includes some possibilities, and if you type "signal phrases" into a search engine, you will get a number of solid lists:

• argue • ask • assert • assess • believe • claim • compare • conclude	• contrast • determine • evaluate • explain • find • hypothesize • insist • measure	• point out • propose • question • recommend • study • suggest • sum up • warn
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Summarizing Sources

When you summarize material from a source, you zero in on the main points and restate them concisely in your own words. This technique is appropriate when only the major ideas are relevant to your paper or when you need to simplify complex information into a few key points for your readers. Be sure to review the source material as you summarize it. Identify the main idea and restate it as concisely as you can, preferably in one sentence. Depending on your purpose, you may also add another sentence or two condensing any important details or examples. Check your summary to make sure it is accurate and complete.

Paraphrasing Sources

As explained in Chapter 1.3 of this textbook, when you paraphrase material from a source, restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them. Again, it is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing: that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer's own language and style. Again, online paraphrasing tools/websites are a waste of time (Chapter 1.3).

Quoting Sources Directly

Most of the time, you will summarize or paraphrase source material instead of quoting directly. Doing so shows that you understand your research well enough to write about it confidently in your own words. However, direct quotes can be powerful when used sparingly and with purpose.

Quoting directly can sometimes help you make a point in a colorful way. If an author's words are especially vivid, memorable, or well phrased, quoting them may help hold your reader's interest. Direct quotations from an interviewee or an eyewitness may help you personalize an issue for readers. And when you analyze primary sources, such as a historical speech or a work of literature, quoting extensively is often necessary to illustrate your points. These are valid reasons to use quotations.

Less experienced writers, however, sometimes overuse direct quotations in a research paper because it seems easier than paraphrasing. At best, this reduces the effectiveness of the quotations. At worst, it results in a paper that seems haphazardly pasted together from outside sources. Use quotations sparingly for greater impact. When you do choose to quote directly from a source, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure you have transcribed the original statement accurately.
- Represent the author's ideas honestly. Quote enough of the original text to reflect the author's point accurately.
- Never use a stand-alone, or "dropped in," quotation. Always integrate the quoted material into your own sentence (if it's not its own sentence).
- Use ellipses (. . .) if you need to omit a word or phrase. Use brackets [] if you need to replace a word or phrase or add any explanation or clarification of the original.
- Make sure any omissions or changed words do not alter the meaning of the original text. Omit or replace words only when absolutely necessary to shorten the text or to make it grammatically correct within your sentence.
- Always explicate fully. As stated in Chapter 1.3, explicating is how you show a reader why that quote is important and what it means in the context of your argument. Full explication of EACH quote helps you establish your voice and avoid giving it away to your sources.
- Remember to include correctly formatted citations that follow the assigned style guide.



It is important to accurately represent a colleague's ideas or communications in the workplace. When writing professional or academic papers, be mindful of how the words you use to describe someone's tone or ideas carry certain connotations. Do not say a source argues a particular point unless an argument is, in fact, presented. Use lively language, but avoid language that is emotionally charged. Doing so will ensure you have represented your colleague's words in an authentic and accurate way.

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5.4: Gathering Your Sources

Gathering Your Sources



Now that you have planned your research project, you are ready to begin the research. This phase can be both exciting and challenging. As you read this section, you will learn ways to locate sources efficiently, so you will have enough time to read the sources, take notes, and think about how to use them in your research paper.

In addition to finding sources, research entails determining the relevance and reliability of sources, organizing findings, as well as deciding whether and how to use sources in your paper. The technological advances of the past few decades, particularly the rise of online media, mean that, as a twenty-first-century student, you have countless sources of information available at your fingertips. But how can you tell whether a source is reliable?

This section will discuss strategies for finding and evaluating sources so that you can be a media-savvy researcher.

Depending on your assignment, you will likely search for sources by using:

- Internet search engines to locate sources freely available on the web.
- A library's online catalog to identify print books, ebooks, periodicals, and other items in the library's collection.
- Online databases to locate articles, ebooks, streaming videos, images, and other electronic resources. These databases can also help you identify articles in print periodicals.

Your instructor, as well as your librarians and tutors, can help you determine which of these methods will best fit your project and learn to use the search tools available to you. You can also find research guides and tutorials on library websites and online video channels that can help you identify appropriate research tools and learn how to use them. As you gather sources, you will need to examine them with a critical eye.

Smart researchers continually ask themselves two questions: "Is this source relevant to my purpose?" and "Is this source reliable?" The first question will help you avoid wasting valuable time reading sources that stray too far from your specific topic and research questions. The second question will help you find accurate and trustworthy sources.



Businesses, government organizations, and nonprofit organizations produce published materials that range from brief advertisements and brochures to lengthy, detailed reports. In many cases, producing these publications requires research. A corporation's annual report may include research about economic or industry trends. A charitable organization may use information from research in materials sent to potential donors. Regardless of the industry you work in, you may be asked to assist in developing materials for publication. Often, incorporating research in these documents can make them more effective in informing or persuading readers.

Identifying Primary and Secondary Sources

When you chose a paper topic and determined your research questions, you conducted preliminary research to stimulate your thinking. Your research plan included some general ideas for how to go about your research; for instance, interviewing an expert in the field or analyzing the content of popular magazines. You may even have identified a few potential sources.

Now it is time to conduct a more focused, systematic search for informative primary and secondary sources. Writers classify research resources in two categories: primary sources and secondary sources.

Primary sources are direct, firsthand sources of information or data. For example, if you were writing a paper about the First Amendment right to freedom of speech, the text of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights would be a primary source. Other primary sources include the following:

- Data
- Works of visual art
- Literary texts
- Historical documents such as diaries or letters
- Autobiographies, interviews, or other personal accounts

Secondary sources discuss, interpret, analyze, consolidate, or otherwise rework information from primary sources. In researching a paper about the First Amendment, you might read articles about legal cases that involved First Amendment rights, or editorials expressing commentary on the First Amendment. These sources would be considered secondary sources because they are one step removed from the primary source of information. The following are examples of secondary sources:

Academic books, monographs, and articles

- Literary criticism
- Biographies
- Reviews
- Documentaries
- News reports

Your topic and purpose determine whether you must cite both primary and secondary sources in your paper. Ask yourself which sources are most likely to provide the information that will answer your research questions.

If you are writing a research paper about reality television shows, you will need to use some reality shows as a primary source, but secondary sources, such as a reviewer's critique, are also important. If you are writing about the health effects of nicotine, you will probably want to read the published results of scientific studies, but secondary sources, such as magazine articles discussing the outcome of a recent study, may also be helpful.

Some sources could be considered primary or secondary sources, depending on the writer's purpose for using them. For instance, if a writer's purpose is to inform readers about how the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has affected elementary education in the United States, then a Time magazine article on the subject would be a secondary source. However, suppose the writer's purpose is to analyze how the news media has portrayed the effects of NCLB. In that case, articles about the legislation in news magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report* would be primary sources. They provide firsthand examples of the media coverage the writer is analyzing.

Pay close attention to your professor's requirements for sources. You will mostly be required to include some academic (alternatively called "scholarly") sources in your project. Many professors value these sources above all others because they see academic research as the best research: written by experts in the field and then reviewed by other experts.

Once you have thought about what kinds of sources are most likely to help you answer your research questions, you may begin your search for sources. The challenge here is to conduct your search both efficiently and thoroughly. On the one hand, effective writers use strategies to help them find the sources that are most relevant and reliable while steering clear of sources that will not be useful; on the other hand, they are open to pursuing different lines of inquiry that come up along the way than those that seemed relevant at the start of research. As a process of discovery, good research requires critical thinking about, and often revising of, writers' plans and ideas.

Popular vs. Scholarly Periodicals

When you search for periodicals, be sure to distinguish among different types.

Here is an Excellent video produced by the GSU Library that talks about the difference between popular and scholarly resources: [Popular vs. Scholarly](#)

Mass-market publications, such as newspapers and popular magazines, differ from scholarly publications in their accessibility, audience, and purpose.

Popular Periodicals

Newspapers and magazines are written for a broader audience than academic / scholarly journals. Their content is usually quite accessible and easy to read. For example, you could read an article in *Sports Illustrated* while waiting at the dentist. Since your dentist has a wide range of patients, the magazines need to reflect that range. Trade magazines that target readers within a particular industry may presume the reader has background knowledge, but these publications are still reader-friendly for a broader audience. Their purpose is to inform and, often, to entertain or persuade readers as well.

Scholarly Journals

Scholarly or academic journals assume that most of their readers are already familiar with the subject. Informing is the primary purpose of a scholarly journal. If a journal article advances an agenda or advocates a position, the content will still be presented in a scholarly manner. Entertaining readers with breezy comments and splashy graphics is not a priority. They are often long, anywhere from 15 to 50 pages.

Because of these differences, scholarly journals are more challenging to read. That doesn't mean you should avoid them. On the contrary, they can provide in-depth information unavailable elsewhere. Because knowledgeable professionals carefully review the content before publication in a process called "peer-review," scholarly journals are far more reliable than much of the information available in popular media. Seek out academic journals along with other resources. Just be prepared to spend a little more time processing the information.

Gray Area Sources

"Hybrid" or "Gray Area" Sources: Sometimes, you'll find an article in a popular magazine that has the expertise of a scholarly article, so it falls into a "gray area" between academic and popular. For example, Jorge found a long (22 pages), well-researched article about both the history of college sports and its current scandals: [The Shame of College Sports opens in new window](#), by Taylor Branch. Taylor Branch is a highly respected and expert historian who wrote a biography of Martin Luther King, Jr., and writes scholarly research about the movement for Civil Rights.

Because the article appeared in [The Atlantic](#), a magazine geared toward an educated and engaged, but wide and popular readership, Jorge wasn't sure if his professor would see it as "academic," so he forwarded the link to her. After reviewing the article, she told Jorge he could use it as one of his required scholarly sources. Sometimes trade publications and government publications will fall into this category. The best thing to do when you run into a "hybrid" or "gray area" source is to check with your professor.



Periodicals databases are not just for students writing research papers. They also provide a valuable service to workers in various fields. The owner of a small business might use a database such as *Business Source Premiere* to find articles on management, finance, or trends within a particular industry. Health care professionals might consult databases such as *MedLine* to research a particular disease or medication. Regardless of what career path you plan to pursue, periodicals databases can be a useful tool for researching specific topics and identifying periodicals that will help you keep up with the latest news in your industry.

Using Sources from the Open Web



When faced with the challenge of writing a research paper, some students rely on popular search engines, such as Google, as their only source of information. Typing a keyword or phrase into a search engine instantly pulls up links to dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of related websites. What could be easier? While the Web is useful for retrieving information, you should be wary of limiting your research to sources from the open Web.

For example, **wikis**, including online encyclopedias, such as Wikipedia, and community-driven question-and-answer sites, such as Yahoo Answers, are very easy to access on the Web. They are free, and they appear among the first few results when using a search engine. Because these sites are created and revised by a large community of users, they cover thousands of topics, and many are written in an informal and straightforward writing style. However, these sites may not have a reliable control system for researching, writing, and reviewing posts. While wikis may be a good starting point for finding other, more trustworthy, more fully developed sources (always look at a Wiki's sources!), usually they should not be your final sources.

Despite its apparent convenience, researching on the open Web has the following drawbacks to consider:

- Results do not consider the reliability of the sources. The first few hits that appear in search results often include sites whose content is not always reliable. Search engines cannot tell you which sites have accurate information.
- Results may be influenced by popularity or advertisers. Search engines find websites that people visit often and list the results in order of popularity rather than relevance to your topic.
- Results may be too numerous for you to use. Search engines often return an overwhelming number of results. Because it is difficult to filter results for quality or relevance, the most useful sites may be buried deep within your search results. It is not realistic for you to examine every site.
- Results do not include many of the library's high quality electronic resources that are only available through password-protected databases or on campus.

Because anyone can publish anything on the Web, the quality of the information varies greatly and you will need to evaluate web resources carefully. Just because it's there doesn't mean it's a good source.

Nevertheless, a search on the open Web can provide a helpful overview of a topic and may pull up genuinely useful sources.

You may find specialized search engines recommended on your college library's website. For example, <http://www.usa.gov> will search for information on United States government websites. If you are working at your personal computer, use the Bookmarks or Favorites feature of your web browser to save and organize sites that look promising.

Getting the Most out of a Search Engine

To get the most out of a search engine, use strategies to make your search more efficient. Depending on the specific search engine you use, the following options may be available:

- List item 1
- List item 2
- List item 3
- Limit results to websites that have been updated within a particular time frame.
- Limit results by language or region.
- Limit results to scholarly works available online. Google Scholar is an example, but remember: any source you find on Google Scholar won't be free *unless you access it through the library databases*. Therefore, while it's fine to get citations through Google Scholar, you should NEVER have to pay for them.
- Limit results by file type.
- Limit results to a particular site or domain type, such as .edu (school and university sites) or .gov (government sites). This is a quick way to filter out commercial sites that often lead to less objective results.

Types and Formats of Library Sources

Information accessible through a college library comes in a variety of types and formats of sources. Books, DVDS, and various types of periodicals can be found in physical form at the library. Many of these same materials are available in electronic format in the form of ebooks, electronic journal articles, and streaming videos.

Your college library may have some resources in both print and electronic formats while others may be available exclusively in one format. The following lists different types of resources available at college libraries. In addition to the resources noted, library holdings may include primary sources such as historical documents, letters, diaries, and images.

Types of sources

- Reference works provide a summary of information about a particular topic. Almanacs, encyclopedias, atlases, medical reference books, and scientific abstracts are examples of reference works. In most cases, reference books may not be checked out of a library. Note that reference works are many steps removed from original primary sources and are often brief, so these should be used only as a starting point when you gather information. Examples: *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2010*; *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, published by the American Psychiatric Association.
- Nonfiction books provide in-depth coverage of a topic. Trade books, biographies, and how-to guides are usually written for a general audience. Scholarly books and scientific studies are usually written for an audience that has specialized knowledge of a topic. Examples: *Indentured: The Battle to End The Exploitation of College Athletes*; *Carbohydrates, Fats and Proteins: Exploring the Relationship Between Macronutrient Ratios and Health Outcomes*.
- Periodicals are published at regular intervals: daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Newspapers, magazines, and academic journals are different kinds of periodicals. Some periodicals provide articles on subjects of general interest while others are more specialized. Examples: *The New York Times*; *PC Magazine*; *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association*.
- Government publications by federal, state, and local agencies publish information on a variety of topics. Government publications include reports, legislation, court documents, public records, statistics, studies, guides, programs, and forms. Examples: *The Census 2000 Profile*; *The Business Relocation Package*, published by the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.
- Business publications by nonprofit organizations are designed to market a product, provide background about the organization, provide information on topics connected to the organization, or promote a cause. These publications include reports, newsletters, advertisements, manuals, brochures, and other print documents. Examples: a company's instruction manual explaining how to use a specific software program; a news release published by the Sierra Club.
- Documentaries are the moving-image equivalent of nonfiction books. They cover a range of topics and can be introductory or scholarly. Newsreels can be primary sources about then-current events. Feature-length programs or episodes of a series can be secondary sources about historical phenomena or life stories. You may view a documentary in a movie theater, on television, on an open website, or in a subscription-accessed database such as Films on Demand. Examples: *Freedom Riders*, directed by Stanley Nelson; *Finding Your Roots*, with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

As you gather information, check in frequently with your professor, who will guide you throughout the research process. Many professors require an annotated bibliography near the end of the researching phase so that they can make sure that you have the right kinds and amounts of sources for your project.

When you first begin your research, you'll find many more sources than you will be required to cite in your project. Your job is to skim all of the relevant sources you find, or to read their abstracts (a brief summary), so that you can get a sense of what the body of research says about your topic or how it answers your research question.

Once you have a good sense of that, you need to pick what you think are the best representatives of that body of research and get to know them. These will likely be the sources you'll use in the final project. Don't just pick the minimum number of required sources. Students who do this often get sub-optimal grades because their sources don't really help them understand the topic.

Using Databases

While library catalogs can help you locate print and electronic book-length sources, as well as some types of non-print holdings, such as CDs, DVDs, and audiobooks, the best way to locate shorter sources, such as articles in magazines, newspapers, and journals, is to search online databases accessible through a portal to which your college's library subscribes.

In many cases, the full texts of articles are available from these databases. In other instances, articles are indexed, meaning there is a summary and publication information about the article, but the full text is not immediately available in the database; instead, you may find the indexed article in a print periodical in your college's library holdings, you can use a service that searches other college universities in the area, or you can submit an online request for an interlibrary loan, and a librarian will email a digitized copy (often as a PDF) of the article to you.

When searching for sources using a password-protected portal, such as a state university system's virtual library, it's important to understand where and how to look up your topic.

Many university school libraries have something on their homepage called the "Discover" tool, which allows you to search many (but not all) databases at once. If you don't find useful sources using the portal's general search bar, then you may retrieve better results by going to specific databases within the portal. Many college library websites have online video tutorials that show you how to search the databases.

Library Databases



Here is Georgia State Library's video tutorial about how to search in the databases: [Research Databases at GSU Libraries](#)

As these tutorials show, on a library homepage or portal such as GALILEO, you can choose specific databases by going to "Databases A-Z" or "Databases by Subject."

Databases may be general, including many types of resources on a broad range of subjects, or they may be specialized, focusing on a particular format of resource or a specific subject area. The following list describes some commonly used indexes and databases accessible through libraries' research portals.

- *ProQuest Central* includes a wide variety of newspaper and scholarly articles
- *Academic Search Complete* includes articles on a wide variety of topics published in various forums, both scholarly and popular.
- *Opposing Viewpoints* includes articles, statistics, and recommended websites related to a wide range of controversial issues.
- *Nexis Uni* has articles from newspapers and other periodicals, news transcripts, and business and legal information.
- *Business Source Complete* comprises business-related content from magazines, journals, and trade publications.
- *Films on Demand* has streaming video of documentaries and historic newsreels.
- *Artstor* has high-quality images of works of visual art of various media, as well as information on the creators, subjects, materials, and holdings of artworks.
- *JSTOR* includes full-text scholarly secondary sources, including books and articles, as well as primary sources on a wide variety of topics, mostly in the humanities and social sciences.
- *History Reference Center* has full-text articles from reference books, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals as well as images and streaming videos on most of the world's cultures and time periods.
- *Gale Literary Sources* includes full-text print and electronic sources relevant to literature, such as biographies of authors, reviews of works, overviews of plots and characters, analyses of themes, and scholarly criticism.
- *Science and Technology Collection* has full-text articles from journals in various scientific and technical fields.
- *MEDLINE*, *CINAHL*, and *Consumer Health Source* contain articles in medicine and health.

Sometimes you will know exactly which source you are looking for, as in the case of your instructor or another writer referencing that source. Having the author (if available), title, and other information about the source included in an end-of-text citation will help you to find that source.

As you go through the process of gathering sources, you will likely need to find specific sources referenced by others to build your list of useful sources; use the steps above to help you do this. However, keep in mind that, especially when you first start researching, you will also need to find sources about your topic having little or no idea what sources are out there. Therefore, rather than authors and titles, you will need to enter keywords, or subject search terms, related to your topic. The next section instructs you on how to do that.

Entering Search Terms

One of the most important steps in conducting research is to "learn how to speak database," as the GSU video shows. To find reliable sources efficiently, you must identify single words or phrases that represent the major concepts of your research, that is, your keywords, or subject search terms. Your starting points for developing search terms are the topic and the research questions you identify, but you should also think of synonyms for those terms. Furthermore, as you begin searching for sources, you should notice additional terms in the subjects listed in the records of your results. These subjects will help you find additional sources.

As Jorge used his library's catalog and databases, he worked to refine his search by making note of subjects associated with sources about how the NCAA treats its athletes. His search helped him identify the following additional terms and related topics to research:

- student athlete unionizing
- student athlete image licensing rights
- NCAA food allowance

Consulting a Librarian

Sifting through library stacks and database search results to find the information you need can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Knowing the right keywords can sometimes make all the difference in conducting a successful search.

If you are not sure how you should begin your search, or if your search is yielding too many, or too few, results, then you are not alone. Many students find this process challenging, although it does get easier with experience. One way to learn better search strategies is to consult a reference librarian and watch online tutorials that research experts have created to help you. If you have trouble finding sources on a topic, consult a librarian, in person, over the phone, or through a college library's chat function.

Librarians are intimately familiar with the systems that libraries use to organize and classify information. They can help you locate a particular book in the library stacks, steer you toward useful reference works, and provide tips on how to use databases and other electronic research tools.

Take the time to see what resources you can find on your own, but if you encounter difficulties, ask for help. Many academic librarians are available for online chatting, texting, and emailing as well as face-to-face reference consultations.

To make the most of your time with a librarian, be prepared to explain to the librarian the assignment and your timeline as well as your research questions and ideas for keywords. Because they are familiar with the resources available, librarians may be able to recommend specific resources that fit your needs and tailor your keywords to the search tools you are using, and they can help you track down and obtain sources at other institutions.

GSU Library Resources



- Requesting items from other GSU libraries: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPMjPSdXa5M>
- Requesting items from USG libraries: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzQ-ua9KkRs&t=4s>

Exercise: Searching for Sources



Step 1

At the [Library of Congress website opens in new window](#), search for results on a few terms related to your topic.

Review your search results to identify at least six additional terms you might use when you search for sources using your college library's catalog and databases.

Step 2

Visit your library's website or consult with a librarian to determine which databases would be useful for your research. Identify at least two relevant databases. Conduct a keyword search in these databases to find potentially relevant sources for your topic. Also, search your college's online library catalog. If the catalog or database you are using provides abstracts of sources, then read them to

determine how useful the sources are likely to be.

Print out, email to yourself, or save your search results.

Step 3

In your list of results, identify three to five sources to review more closely. If the full text is available online, set aside time to open, save, and read it.

If you can, visit the library to locate any sources you need that are only available in print. If the source is not available directly through your school's library, then use the library's online tool to request an interlibrary loan of the source: librarians will send the source in digital form to your email address for you to open and save, or they will send it in print form to your campus library for you to check out.

Turn in

Cut and paste the following into a document, fill out the answers, and turn it in:

TOPIC:

SIX TERMS FROM LIBRARY OF CONGRESS:

TWO DATABASES:

FIVE SOURCES:

Evaluating and Processing Your Sources



Determining Whether a Source Is Relevant

At this point in your research process, you may have identified dozens of potential sources. It is easy for writers to get so caught up in gathering sources that they forget to ask themselves how they will use these resources in their research. Now is a good time to get a little ruthless. Reading and taking notes takes time and energy, so you will want to focus on the most relevant sources.

You may benefit from seeking out sources that are current, or up to date. Depending on your topic, sources may become outdated relatively soon after publication, or they may remain useful for years. For instance, online social networking sites have evolved rapidly over the past few years. An article published in 2002 about this topic will not provide current information.

On the other hand, a research paper on elementary education practices might refer to studies published decades ago by influential child psychologists. When using websites for research, look on the web page to see when the site was last updated. Many non-functioning links are a sign that a website is not regularly updated. Do not be afraid to ask your instructor, tutors, and librarians for suggestions if you find that many of your most relevant sources are not especially reliable, or that your most reliable sources are not relevant.

To weed through your collection of books and articles, skim their contents. Read quickly with your research questions and subtopics in mind. The following tips explain how to skim to get a quick sense of what topics are covered. If a book or article is not especially relevant, put it aside. You can always come back to it later if you need to.

Two Panels start copy

Tips for Skimming Books

- Read the book cover and table of contents for a broad overview of the topics covered.
- Use the index to locate more specific topics and see how thoroughly they are covered.
- Flip through the book and look for subtitles or key terms that correspond to your research.

Tips for Skimming Articles

- Journal articles often begin with an abstract or summary of the contents. Read it to determine the article's relevance to your research.
- Skim the introduction and conclusion for summary material.
- Skim through subheadings and text features such as sidebars.
- Look for keywords related to your topic.

Determining Whether a Source Is Reliable

All information sources are not created equal. Sources can vary greatly in terms of how carefully they are researched, written, edited, and reviewed for accuracy. Common sense will help you identify obviously questionable sources, such as tabloids that feature tales of alien abductions, or personal websites with glaring typos. Sometimes, however, a source's reliability, or lack of it, is not so obvious. To evaluate your research sources, you will use critical thinking skills consciously and deliberately.

Sources you encounter will be written for distinct purposes and with particular audiences in mind, which may account for differences such as the following:

- How thoroughly writers cover a given topic
- How carefully writers research and document facts
- How editors review the work
- What biases or agendas affect the content
- The author's or publication's credentials

A journal article written for an academic audience for the purpose of expanding scholarship in a given field will take an approach quite different from a magazine feature written to inform a general audience. Textbooks, hard news articles, and websites approach a subject from different angles as well. To some extent, the type of source provides clues about its overall depth and reliability. Use the following descriptions of types of sources to help you determine the quality of your sources.

- **High Quality/Credible Sources** provide the most in-depth information. They are written and reviewed by subject-matter experts. Examples: books published by university presses and articles in scholarly journals, such as *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*; trade books and magazines geared toward an educated general audience, such as *Smithsonian Magazine*; government documents; documents by reputable organizations, such as universities and research institutes.
- **Varied Quality Sources** are often useful; however, they do not cover subjects in as much depth as high-quality sources, and they are not always rigorously researched and reviewed. Some, such as popular magazine articles or company brochures, may be written to market a product or a cause. Textbooks and reference books are usually reliable, but they may not cover a topic in great depth. Use them with caution. Examples: news stories and feature articles (print or online) from reputable newspapers, magazines, or organizations, such as *The New York Times* or the Public Broadcasting Service; popular magazine articles, which may or may not be carefully researched and fact checked; documents by businesses and nonprofit organizations.
- The author's or publication's credentials

Questionable Sources are often written primarily to attract a large readership or to present the author's opinions, and they are not subject to careful review. Generally, avoid using these as final sources. If you want to use a source that fits into this category, then carefully evaluate it using criteria below. Examples: loosely regulated or unregulated media content, such as Internet discussion boards, blogs, free online encyclopedias, talk shows, television news shows with obvious political biases, personal websites, and chat rooms. **Remember:** just because it exists, doesn't mean it's a good or useful source.

Even when you are using a type of source that is generally reliable, you will still need to evaluate the author's credibility and the publication itself on an individual basis. To examine the author's credibility, that is, how much you can believe of what the author has to say, examine his or her credentials. What career experience or academic study shows that the author has the expertise to write about this topic? Keep in mind that expertise in one field is no guarantee of expertise in another, unrelated area. For instance, an author may have an advanced degree in physiology, but this credential is not a valid qualification for writing about psychology. Check credentials carefully.

Just as important as the author's credibility is the publication's overall reputability. Reputability refers to a source's standing and reputation as a respectable, reliable source of information.

An established and well-known newspaper, such as *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*, is more reputable than a college newspaper put out by comparatively inexperienced students. A website that is maintained by a well-known, respected organization and regularly updated is more reputable than one created by an unknown author or group.

Whenever you consult a source, always think carefully about the author's or authors' purpose in presenting the information. Few sources present facts completely objectively. In some cases, the source's content and tone are significantly influenced by biases or hidden agendas.

Bias refers to favoritism or prejudice toward a particular person or group. For instance, an author may be biased against a certain political party and present information in a way that subtly or not so subtly makes that organization look bad. Bias can lead an author to present facts selectively, edit quotations to misrepresent someone's words, and distort information.

Hidden agendas are goals that are not immediately obvious but influence how an author presents the facts. For instance, an article about the role of beef in a healthy diet would be questionable if it were written by a representative of the beef industry or by the president of an animal-rights organization. In both cases, the author would likely have a hidden agenda.

Jorge's Research Paper

As Jorge conducted his research, he read several research studies in which economists studied possible methods by which colleges could use money generated by television contracts with the NCAA to pay student-athletes. He also noticed that many popular articles which argued against paying student athletes depended on information they received from the NCAA, which he considered a biased source. Jorge read these studies with a critical eye, knowing that a hidden agenda might be shaping the writers' conclusions.

Summary

In sum, to evaluate a source, you should consider not only how current the source is but also criteria such as the type of source, its intended purpose and audience, the author's (or authors') qualifications, the publication's reputation, any indications of bias or hidden agendas, and the overall professionalism of the source's language, ideas, and design. You should consider these criteria as well as your overall impressions of the source's quality. Read carefully, and notice how well authors present and support their statements. Stay actively engaged: do not simply accept a source's words as truth.

The sorting process takes time as you move from having a lot of sources to really getting to know and quoting from the sources you rely on most for your project (or the minimum number of sources you need to use for this assignment). Think of a sideways cone with the open end on the left, and the narrow, closed end on the right. At the open end is all of the sources that you initially gathered and skimmed: the good, the maybe useful, the irrelevant. As you get to know the body of research about your topic, you will start to pick sources that represent different aspects or categories/subtopics of the broader topic. Each time you move closer to the narrow end of the cone, you'll pick and really get to know those representative sources.



The critical thinking skills you use to evaluate research sources as a student are equally valuable when you conduct research on the job. If you follow certain periodicals or websites, you have probably identified publications that consistently provide reliable information. Reading blogs and online discussion groups is a great way to identify new trends and hot topics in a particular field, but these sources should not be your final sources if you're doing substantial research.

Exercise: Evaluating a Source



Chose a source you found that you think is relevant, but you're unsure if it's reliable.

Answer the following questions about the source:

- Can you establish that the author is credible and the publication is reputable?
- Does the author support ideas with specific facts and details that are carefully documented? Is the source of the author's information clear? When you use secondary sources, look for sources that are not too removed from primary research.
- Does the author leave out any information that you would expect to see in a discussion of this topic?
- Does the source include any factual errors or instances of faulty logic?
- Do the author's conclusions logically follow from the evidence that is presented? Can you see how the author gets to one point from another?
- Is the writing clear and free from errors, clichés, and empty buzzwords?
- Is the tone objective, balanced, and reasonable? Does the source convey any biases? Be on the lookout for extreme, emotionally charged language.
- Based on what you know about the author, is he or she likely to have any hidden agendas?
- Is the source's design professional? Are graphics informative, useful, and easy to understand? If the source is a website, is it well organized, easy to navigate, and free of clutter like flashing ads and unnecessary sound effects?
- Is the source contradicted by information you found in other sources? If so, it is possible that your sources are presenting similar information but taking different perspectives, which requires you to think carefully about which sources you find more convincing and why.

Be suspicious, however, of any source that presents facts you cannot confirm elsewhere.



As you determine which sources you will rely on most, it is important to establish a system for keeping track of your sources and taking notes. There are several ways to go about it, and no one system is necessarily superior. Here's what matters: you keep materials in order; record bibliographical information you will need later, and take detailed, organized notes.

Think ahead to a moment a few weeks from now, when you've written your research paper and are almost ready to submit it for a grade. There is just one task left: writing your list of sources. As you begin typing your list, you realize you need to include the publication information for a book you cited frequently. Unfortunately, you already returned it to the library several days ago. You do not remember the URLs for some of the websites you used or the dates you accessed them, or information that also must be included in your bibliography. With a sinking feeling, you realize that finding this information and preparing your bibliography will require hours of work.

This stressful scenario can be avoided. Taking time to organize source information now will ensure that you are not scrambling to find it at the last minute. Throughout your research, record bibliographical information for each source as soon as you begin using it.

You may use pen-and-paper methods, such as a notebook or note cards, or maintain an electronic list. (If you prefer the latter option, many office software packages include separate programs for recording bibliographic information.)

The following table shows the specific details you should record for commonly used source types. Use these details to develop a working bibliography, a preliminary list of sources that you will later use to develop the references section of your paper. It will save you time later on to record, from the start, all information you will need about your sources to create a Works Cited page. The following lists what you should record for some common types of sources. Your research may involve other types of sources not listed below. For more information on formatting citations, consult the APA website at <http://www.apa.org> or the MLA Guide on the [MLA Style Center](#). Online writing labs (OWLs), such as the [Excelsior Online Writing Lab](#).

1. Book: the author(s), title, subtitle, publisher, city of publication, and year of publication.
2. Work (e.g., article) in an anthology (i.e., book): the work's author(s), title, and subtitle; the book's title, subtitle, editor(s); any edition and volume numbers of the book; the book's publisher, city of publication, and year of publication; the pages on which the work appears in the book.
3. Periodical: the author(s), title of the article, title of the publication, date of publication, volume and issue number, and range of page numbers of the article.
4. Online source: the author(s); the title of the work or web page; the title of the website; the organization that sponsors the website; the database name; the date of publication or date of last update; the date you accessed the source.
5. Interview: the name of the person interviewed; the method of communication (e.g., in-person, video chat, email, or phone call); the date of the interview.

As you conduct research, you may wish to record additional details, such as a book's call number, the contact information for a person you interviewed, or the URL of an online source. That will make it easier for you to quickly locate the source again. You may also wish to assign each source a code (e.g., a number, letter, symbol, or color) to use when taking notes.

Taking Notes Efficiently

Writers sometimes get caught up in taking extensive notes, so much so that they lose sight of how their sources help them to answer their research questions. The challenge is to stay focused and organized as you gather information from sources. Before you begin taking notes, take a moment to step back and remind yourself of your goal as a researcher: to find information that will help you answer your research questions. That goal will determine what information you record and how you organize it. When you write your paper, you will present your conclusions about the topic supported by research. Therefore, you do not need to write down every detail of your sources; some of the information in relevant sources will be irrelevant to your research questions.

There are several formats you can use to take notes. No technique is necessarily better than the others; it is more important to choose a format you are comfortable using. Choose a note-taking method from among those listed below that works best for you, and use it as you gather sources. Using the techniques discussed in this section will prepare you for the next step in writing your research paper: organizing and synthesizing the information you find.

- **Use index cards.** This traditional format involves writing each note on a separate index card. It takes more time than copying and pasting into an electronic document, which encourages you to be selective in choosing which ideas to record. Recording notes on separate cards makes it easy to later organize your notes according to major topics. Some writers color-code their cards to make them even more organized.
- **Maintain a research notebook.** Instead of using index cards or electronic note cards, you may wish to keep a notebook or electronic folder, allotting a few pages (or one file) for each of your sources. This method makes it easy to create a separate column or section of the document where you add your responses to the information you encounter in your research.
- **Annotate your sources.** This method involves making handwritten notes in the margins of sources that you have printed or photocopied. If using electronic sources, you can make comments within the source document. For example, you might add comment boxes to a PDF version of an article. This method works best for experienced researchers who have already thought a great deal about the topic because it can be difficult to organize your notes later when starting your draft.
- **Use note-taking software.** There are many options for taking and organizing notes electronically. These include word-processing software that you can use offline on a computer. They also include tools and apps like Diigo, Evernote, Notability, and Mindomo, available on the Web for free or reduced prices if you will use the tool for educational purposes. Although you may need to set aside time to learn how to use them, digital tools offer you possibilities that handwritten note cards do not, such as searching your notes, copying and pasting your notes into your paper, and saving and sharing your notes online.

Whether you use old-fashioned index cards or organize your notes digitally, you should keep all your notes in one place, and use topic headings to group related details. Doing so will help you identify connections among different sources. It will also help you make connections between your notes and the research questions and subtopics you identified earlier. Throughout the process of taking notes, be scrupulous about making sure you have correctly attributed each idea or piece of information to its source. Always include source information or use a code system (e.g., numbers, letters, symbols, or colors) so you know exactly which claims or evidence came from which sources.

Effective researchers make choices about which types of notes are most appropriate for their purpose. Your notes may fall into three categories:

- **Summary notes** sum up the main ideas in a source in a few sentences or a short paragraph. A summary is considerably shorter than the original text and captures only the major ideas. Use summary notes when you do not need to record specific details but you intend to refer to broad concepts the author discusses.
- **Paraphrased notes** restate a fact or idea from a source using your own words and sentence structure.
- **Direct quotations** use the exact wording used by the original source and enclose the quoted material in quotation marks. It is a good strategy to copy direct quotations when an author expresses an idea in an especially lively or memorable way. However, do not rely exclusively on direct quotations in your note taking.

Summarizing and paraphrasing as you take notes is usually a better strategy than copying direct quotations because it forces you to think through the claims and evidence in your source and to understand it well enough to restate it. In short, these methods of note-taking help you to stay engaged with your topic instead of simply copying and pasting text from sources. Using them will help

you when you draft your paper.

Paraphrase ideas carefully, and check your paraphrased notes against the original text to make sure you have restated the author's ideas accurately.

Use quotation marks to set off any words or phrases taken directly from the source. With direct quotations, again, make sure your notes accurately reflect the content of the original text: check that quoted material is copied verbatim. If you omit words from a quotation, use ellipses to show the omission, and make sure the omission does not change the author's meaning. If you add your own responses and ideas to your notes, mark them as such so that your own thinking about the topic stands out from ideas you summarized or paraphrased.

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5.5: Documenting Your Source Material

Documenting Your Source Material



A reader interested in your subject wants not only to read what you wrote but also to be aware of the works that you used to create it. Readers may want to enter the discussion on your topic, using some of the same sources that you have. They also may want to examine your sources to see if you know your subject, if you missed anything, or if you offer anything new and interesting. Your sources may offer the reader additional insight on the subject being considered. It also demonstrates that you, as the author, are up-to-date on what is happening in the field or on the subject. In sum, giving credit where it is due contributes to research on your topic and enhances your credibility.

Throughout the writing process, be scrupulous about documenting information taken from sources. Again, there are multiple reasons for doing so:

- To give credit to others for their ideas
- To allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired
- To build your own reputation as a writer

It is important to indicate the source both in your essay and in a bibliography, list of references, or Works Cited to prevent the possibility of plagiarism. If you follow the appropriate style guide (e.g., APA, Chicago Manual, and MLA), pay attention to detail, and clearly indicate your sources, then this approach to formatting and citation offers a proven way to demonstrate your respect for others and earn their respect in return.

Citing Sources in Your Paper

You need to cite all your information: if someone else wrote it, said it, drew it, demonstrated it, or otherwise expressed it, you need to cite it. The exception to this statement is common, widespread knowledge, but if you are ever in doubt, ask your professor or go ahead and document the material.

If you are using MLA style, then your citation of the source in the body of the essay will point to the Works Cited page at the end.

You must cite your sources as you use them, mentioning the author or title of the source by name if you summarize its ideas and giving the author or title of the source as well as the page number (if available) in parentheses if you paraphrase or directly quote the source.

The reference to the author or title is like a signal to readers that information has been incorporated from a separate source. It also provides readers with the information they need to locate the source in the Works Cited at the end of your essay where they can find the complete reference.

It is important to understand why, in MLA Style, the reference page is called "Works Cited." Every source referenced in the Works Cited page MUST also exist as a parenthetical citation (a citation in parenthesis), in the text of the paper.

The parenthetical citation works as a short hand for pointing the reader to the source material located on the Works Cited Page. Therefore, the name or title that appears in a parenthetical citation must be alphabetically indexed in the source material found in

the Works Cited page.

For example, if you use (Wagoner 45) as a parenthetical reference, the reader should be able to locate "Wagoner" in the alphabetical list of references on the Works Cited page.

If you are using the APA, Chicago, Turabian, Blue Book, or any of the other citation styles which exist in the different disciplines, make sure that you have access to the current guidelines for that citation style. There's no need to memorize the rules; they change frequently, and they are easy to look up. As the library video shows, many library databases and online tools create bibliographic/works cited entries for you. It's best, however, to double-check that citation against the rules--as we explain below.



ZOTERO is an Open Educational Resource created by the Center for History and the New Media at George Mason University. It is a bibliographic management system that will auto-cite sources in the correct format, and build a perfectly formatted Works Cited/Bibliography for your paper automatically. It takes about 30 minutes to learn. [Here](#) is a set of step-by-step instructions for using it.

Creating a List of References

Each of the sources you cite in the body of your paper should appear in a list of references at the end of your paper. If you're using MLA style, then your Works Cited should list the sources alphabetically by last name, or by title if the author is not identified. While in-text citations provide the most basic information about the source, your Works Cited will include more complete publication details. There are a number of ways to learn how to properly cite your sources on your Works Cited:

- An Online Writing Lab, such as [Excelsior OWL](#)
- A current edition of *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.
- Online videos found by searching for "MLA style" on YouTube.

One of the many advantages of using sources from databases is that the databases themselves, or the platforms which host them, usually include a citation of the source at the bottom of the HTML full text of the source or a "Cite" tool accessible from the record of the source in the list of search results.

When using these automatically-generated citations, be sure to select and copy the citation in the style that you have been assigned to use. Also, be sure to review the citation that the database or platform has generated, as it may include some errors in it.

An error that consistently occurs using a "Cite" tool is the capitalization of titles; in the United States, the first letters of the first and last words of titles are always capitalized, and so are the first letters of all words in-between except for articles (a, an, the), conjunctions (and, but, or), and prepositions (at, by, for, in, of, on, etc.).

The "Cite" tool does not distinguish between parts of speech when capitalizing words in titles, so you will need to change some letters in titles to lowercase in order to properly format your citations.

Avoiding Plagiarism



Your research paper presents your thinking about a topic, supported and developed by other people's ideas and information. It is crucial to always distinguish between the two as you conduct research, as you plan your paper, and as you write. Failure to do so can lead to plagiarism.

If you incorporate the words or ideas of a source into your own writing without giving full credit, then you are plagiarizing that source. In both professional and academic settings the penalties for plagiarism are severe.

In the professional world, plagiarism may result in loss of credibility, diminishment in compensation, and even loss of employment, including future opportunities. That is, employees may be fired for plagiarism and do irreparable damage to their professional reputation. In a class, a student's plagiarism may result in a range of sanctions, from the loss of points on an assignment to a failing grade in the course to expulsion from college.

The concepts and strategies discussed in this section connect to a larger issue: academic integrity. You maintain your integrity as a member of an academic community by representing your work and others' work honestly and by using other people's work only in legitimately accepted ways. It is a point of honor taken seriously in every academic discipline and career field. Even when cheating and plagiarism go undetected, they still result in a student's failure to learn necessary research and writing skills. In short, it is never worth the risk to plagiarize. For more information about Academic Integrity, consult your college's Student Handbook.

Working with Sources Responsibly

Disorganization and carelessness sometimes lead to plagiarism. For instance, writers may be unable to provide complete, accurate citations if they did not record bibliographical information. Writers may cut and paste passages from websites into their papers and later forget where the material came from. Writers who procrastinate may rush through drafts; this easily leads to sloppy paraphrasing and inaccurate quotations. Any of these actions can create the appearance of plagiarism and lead to negative consequences.

Carefully organizing your time and notes is the best guard against these forms of plagiarism. As discussed above, you should maintain a detailed working bibliography and thorough notes throughout the research process. As you incorporate source material into your draft, check original sources again to clear up any uncertainties. Schedule plenty of time for writing your draft so there is no temptation to cut corners.

Intentional and Accidental Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of misrepresenting someone else's work as your own. Sometimes a writer plagiarizes work on purpose: for instance, by purchasing an essay from a website and submitting it as original course work. In other cases, a writer may commit accidental plagiarism due to carelessness, haste, or misunderstanding. To avoid unintentional plagiarism, follow these guidelines:

- Understand what types of information must be cited.
- Understand what constitutes fair use of a source.
- Keep source materials and notes carefully organized.
- Follow guidelines for summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources.

When to Cite

Whether it is quoted or paraphrased, any idea or fact taken from an outside source must be cited, in both the body of your paper and your list of references. The only exceptions are facts or general statements that are common knowledge. Common-knowledge facts or general statements are commonly supported by and found in multiple sources. For example, a writer would not need to cite the statement that most breads, pastas, and cereals are high in carbohydrates; this is well known and well documented. However, if a writer explained in detail the differences among the chemical structures of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, a citation would be necessary. When in doubt, cite (and ask your professors).

Fair Use

In recent years, issues related to the fair use of sources have been prevalent in popular culture. Recording artists, for example, may disagree about the extent to which one has the right to sample another's music.

For academic purposes, however, the guidelines for fair use are reasonably straightforward.

Writers may quote from or paraphrase material from previously published works without formally obtaining the copyright holder's permission.

Fair use means that the writer legitimately uses brief excerpts from source material to support and develop his or her own ideas. For instance, a columnist may excerpt a few sentences from a novel when writing a book review. However, quoting or paraphrasing another's work at excessive length, to the extent that large sections of the writing are unoriginal, is not fair use.

Jorge's Research Paper

As he worked on his draft, Jorge was careful to cite his sources correctly and not to rely excessively on any one source. Occasionally, however, he caught himself quoting a source at great length. In those instances, he highlighted the paragraph in question so that he could go back to it later and revise. Read the example, along with Jorge's revision.

Initial Use of Source Material

Writing about why professors at his school (James Madison) worried when administrators moved toward joining the biggest football conference in the NCAA, Levinovitz argues that "there is no question that FBS programs are risky and that they're correlated with disproportionately high levels of institutional athletics funding. (Statements to the contrary may reflect a conflict of interest, like when the company that produced your feasibility study is also retained to recruit your new head coach.) There's also widespread concern about endorsing a financial scheme dependent on unpaid labor for its solvency . . . labor that [may one day be declared illegal](#). And yes, longtime professors who saw their salaries frozen for five years are viscerally upset by a plan that suggests hiking student fees to fund a major investment in our football program" (Levinovitz 1).

After reviewing the paragraph, Jorge realized that he had drifted into unoriginal writing. Most of the paragraph was taken verbatim from a single article. Although Jorge had enclosed the material in quotation marks, he knew it was not an appropriate way to use the research in his paper.

Revised Use of Source Material

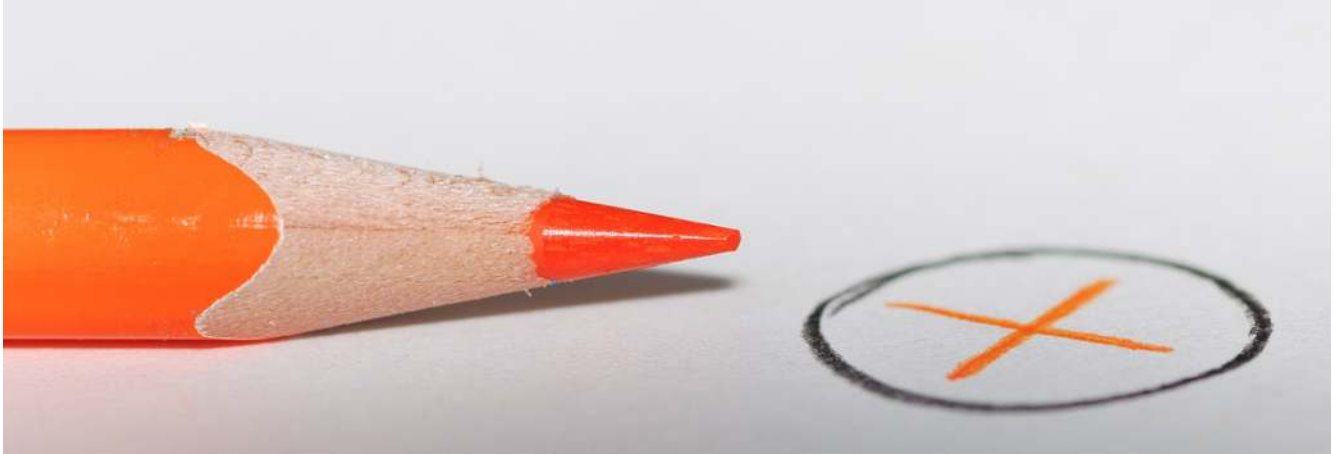
In his article "[Get Your Stadiums Out of Our Churches,](#)" [opens in new window](#) Alan Levinovitz tries to explain why he and other professors at James Madison University are not excited about the expansion of that school's football program. He believes that these programs cost too much and that the cost might never be recouped. He is also worried that assurances made about the return on investment might come from a source who isn't objective about the topic, and that the labor on the part of the athletes cannot go uncompensated forever. In the last sentence of this paragraph, he condenses a number of concerns about cost: "And yes, longtime professors who saw their salaries frozen for five years are viscerally upset by a plan that suggests hiking student fees to fund a major investment in our football program" (Levinovitz 1). In other words, Levinovitz sees students and professors paying for something not all of them may want for the campus. Further, adding to his frustration is that faculty pay has not risen recently. He makes it clear how upset he and his colleagues are that the school doesn't have money to pay its professors properly, but money enough to fund an athletics expansion. He connects the issue of the cost of the future expansion to issues of current deficits.

As Jorge revised the paragraph, he realized he did not need to quote Levinovitz as much. Instead, he paraphrased and summarized more, making sure to explicate. He also made sure to include a topic sentence stating the main idea of the paragraph and a concluding sentence that transitioned to the next major topic in his essay.



Citing other people's work appropriately is just as important in the workplace as it is in school. If you need to consult outside sources to research a document you are creating, follow the general guidelines already discussed, as well as any industry-specific citation guidelines. For more extensive use of others' work, for instance, requesting permission to link to another company or organization's website on your own employer's website, always follow your employer's established procedures.

Exercise: Check Citations



It is important to understand why, in MLA Style, the reference page is called "Works Cited."

Every source referenced in the Works Cited page MUST also exist as a parenthetical citation (a citation in parenthesis), in the text of the paper. The parenthetical citation works as a short hand for pointing the reader to the source material located on the Works Cited Page. Therefore, the name or title that appears in a parenthetical citation must be alphabetically indexed in the source material found on the Works Cited page.

For example, if you use (Wagoner 45) as a parenthetical reference, the reader should be able to locate "Wagoner" in the list of references in the Works Cited page.

With a draft copy of your research paper in hand, pair with a partner. As you read through their paper, check off each reference on their Works Cited page.

- Are there references that are not cited?
- Are there citations that are not referenced?

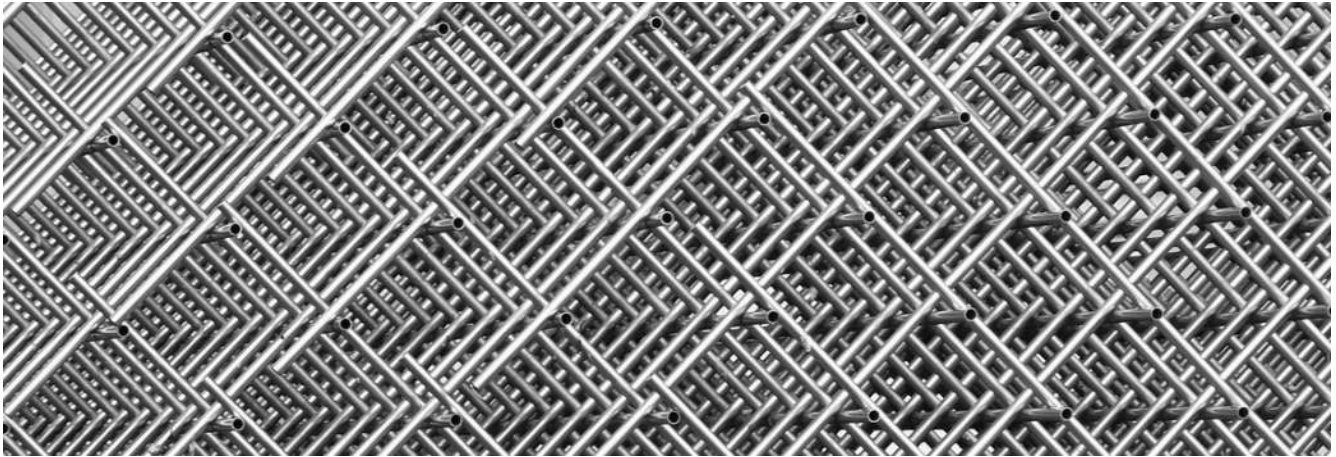
Mark any discrepancies so that your partner can correct the draft.

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5.6: Revising Your Draft

Revising Your Draft



Given all the time and effort you have put into your research paper, you will want to make sure that your final draft represents your best work. This requires taking the time to revise and edit your paper carefully. You may feel that you need a break from your paper before you revise and edit it. That is understandable, but leave yourself with enough time to complete this important stage of the writing process. In this section, you will learn the following specific strategies that are useful for revising and editing a research paper:

- How to evaluate and improve the overall organization and cohesion
- How to maintain an appropriate style and tone
- How to use checklists to identify and correct any errors in language, citations, and formatting

Revising Your Paper's Organization and Cohesion

When writing a research paper, it is easy to become overly focused on editorial details, such as the proper format for bibliographic entries. These details do matter. However, before you begin to address them, it is important to spend time reviewing and revising the content of the project.

A good research paper is both organized and cohesive. Organization means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. Cohesion means that the elements of your paper work together smoothly and naturally. In a cohesive research paper, information from research is seamlessly integrated with the writer's ideas.

When you revise to improve organization, you look at the flow of ideas throughout the essay as a whole and within individual paragraphs. You check to see that your essay moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion, and that each section reinforces your thesis. Writers choose transitions carefully to show the relationships between ideas for instance, to make a comparison or elaborate on a point with examples. Make sure your transitions suit your purpose, and avoid overusing the same ones.

Jorge's Research Paper

Jorge reread his draft paragraph by paragraph. As he read, he highlighted the main idea of each paragraph so he could see whether his ideas proceeded in a logical order. For the most part, the flow of ideas was clear. However, he did notice that one paragraph, his paragraph immediately following his introduction, did not have a clear main idea. It interrupted the flow of the writing. During revision, Jorge added a topic sentence that clearly connected the paragraph to the one that had preceded it. He also added transitions to improve the flow of ideas from sentence to sentence. Read the following paragraphs: the first example is Jorge's first draft without any changes, and the second paragraph shows his revisions:

First Draft:

College sports provide a lot of entertainment in the United States. This entertainment is regulated and sponsored by NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) and its a non-profit organization. NCAA regulates around 400,00 student athletes and 1000-member institution. The NCAA consists of basketball, football, baseball, hockey and many kinds of sports. however, NCAA makes the most money is in basketball (man's and women's) and football. While NCAA gets their money from the revenue of tournaments, colleges will get some of the revenue but colleges make money using other ways. For example, college football use many ways to make money. "Football programs are able to generate a great deal of revenue through gate receipts. Football game day attendance is also an excellent proxy for other revenues. Teams with a large fan base are able to generate more apparel sales, get invited to bigger bowl games, and are able to negotiate larger sponsorship deals." Mark D. Groza, paragraph 3). This will make college get more money. Texas A&M makes the highest revenue of 192.6 million dollars a year. However, ever year the college with highest revenue changes.

Revised Paragraph:

In many parts of the United States, Saturday afternoon means college football in the Fall, and college hoops in the Spring, but many viewers may not know how much money the players of these sports generate for the NCAA and their schools. The players are officially designated as "student-athletes" by the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association), a non-profit organization that regulates around 40,000 student athletes and 1000 member institutions. Most of those member institutions receive funds from the gate receipts, and much of their money comes from television and other sponsorship and licensing deals. For example, according to the economist Mark D. Groza, Texas A&M makes around 192.6 million dollars a year (Groza para. 3).

When you revise to improve cohesion, you analyze how the parts of your paper work together. You look for anything that seems awkward or out of place.

Revision may involve deleting unnecessary material or rewriting parts of the paper so that the out-of place material fits in smoothly.

In a research paper, problems with cohesion usually occur when a writer has trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer's point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect.



Understanding cohesion can also benefit you in the workplace, especially when you have to write and deliver a presentation. Speakers sometimes rely on cute graphics or funny quotations to hold their audience's attention. If you choose to use these elements, make sure they work well with the substantive content of your presentation. For example, if you are asked to give a financial presentation and the financial report shows that the company lost money, then funny illustrations would not be relevant or appropriate for the presentation.

Exercise: Close Reading for Revision



1. Read your paper paragraph by paragraph.
2. Highlight your thesis and the topic sentence of each paragraph.
3. Using the thesis and topic sentences as starting points, outline the ideas you presented, just as you would do if you were outlining a chapter in a textbook. Do not look at the outline you created during prewriting. You may write in the margins of your draft or create a formal outline on a separate sheet of paper.
4. Next, reread your paper more slowly, looking for how ideas flow from sentence to sentence. Identify places where adding a transition or recasting a sentence would make the ideas flow more logically.
5. Review the topics on your outline. Is there a logical flow of ideas? Identify any places where you may need to reorganize ideas.

Exercise: Assessing Citations



Read the body paragraphs of your paper.

Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, ask yourself, "What purpose does this serve?" Check that it helps support a point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph.

Identify unnecessary information from sources you can delete.

Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources. Skim the body paragraphs once more, looking for any paragraphs that seem packed with citations. Review these paragraphs carefully for cohesion. Review your introduction and conclusion. Make sure the information presented works with ideas in the body of the paper.

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5.7: Digital Research Projects

Digital Research Projects



What's a "digital project" and why are we doing one?

If you're asking these questions, your professor has probably required that your research project not be a traditional paper, but a "born digital" project that lives online and takes advantage of online affordances (links, embedded sound and video, etc.) and which are often multimodal (using more than one kind of communication, such as written and visual).

If your professor is asking students to create digital/multimodal projects, it probably means that they want you to build some skills they think you'll need for competent communication in the 21st century. These skills include proficiency in modes of communication beyond the traditional paper, including oral, visual, digital, and electronic media.

These projects can take the shape of podcasts, websites, digital timelines or story maps, videos, educational games, or animations.

Here is an example of a timeline written by a student in an English 1102 class at Georgia State University-Perimeter College. [It is the project that we drew from for Jorge's* sample work earlier in this chapter.](#)

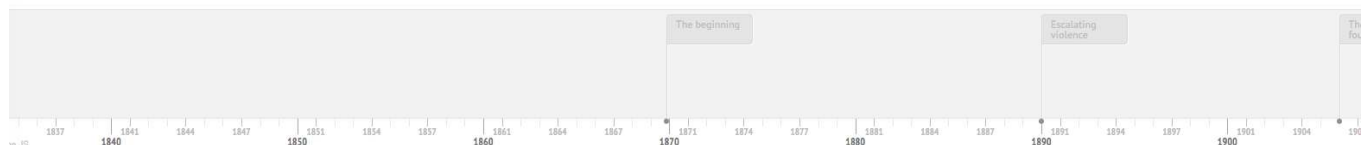


Apple by Clemens v. Vogelsang

Clemens v. Vogelsang

THE ROTTING MORALITY OF COLLEGE SPORTS

"College athletics are rooted in the classical ideal of *Mens sana in corpore sano*—a sound mind in a sound body—and who would argue with that?" (Branch 1) In his essay, *The Shame of College Sports* Taylor Branch references this time-honored ideal that to be mentally healthy one must put effort into the physical well being of their body. This ideal is the purpose for which college sports was founded. Unfortunately, the importance of the mind and its morality was drowned out by the want of profit. Thankfully in recent years many concerned individuals like Branch are bringing the many issues concerning college sports to public attention and suggesting their own solutions, some even suggesting its complete removal from higher education.



[opens in new window](#)

Here is an example of a podcast, posted to a class website, for an English

Here is What you Need to Know

- The **research process** is the same: you still need to find reliable and relevant sources
- **Using research** is the same: you still need to use sources effectively, ethically, and efficiently
- The **composing process** is the same: you still need to craft a good introduction, body, and conclusion

Writing: all of these projects will take significant drafting, regardless of the end project. You need to figure out ahead of time what you want to say and how you will support it. In other words, just like in a paper, you need to have a clear argument and support for that argument. Whatever format you choose, you need to present that information by using rhetorical strategies that you think will be effective for your audience.

You should be writing-writing-writing from the beginning of your research process, even if you're just writing a bunch of messy notes to start. Once you decide on your project format, you will then begin to edit and shape your writing to work for the format.



If your professor has assigned you a digital
research project, DON'T PANIC!

All of these projects need to have:

1. An introduction/beginning that establishes your thesis and why (this is the road-map part)
2. A body/middle that follows the road map, that provides substantial research-based support for your thesis, that is ordered in a logical/sequential way
3. A conclusion/end that leaves your reader with a new take on the topic, a modification, or something to do.

How the different parts of the project are structured and their relationship to each other will depend on the project.

Guidance on the Specific Formats

Websites: This is one of the most writing-intensive of the formats because text-heavy websites look a lot like papers, but there are some differences—you have to think about order and visuals differently than you do with a paper. You will probably use parenthetical in-text citations and you'll likely have a sources page/tab. You should have a home/introduction page and 2-3 substantial (150-300 words or more) tabs with textual, visual, and, if they support your argument, audio or video elements. Any images or sound you use needs to be sourced ethically and cited appropriately.

Podcasts: This format is only auditory, which means that you have to convey everything through sound. You won't be able to provide visual cues. You should consider musical or other kinds of sound transitions between sections, but playing music throughout is not recommended. You need to have some kind of introduction, you need to make an argument, and you need to support that argument with evidence from your sources. In an audio format such as a podcast, you obviously won't use citations. Instead, you would attribute your sources as you introduce them. If you're posting a link to your podcast to a class website, you would provide a list of sources with the link that you post.

Videos: Videos allow for a combination of visual and auditory information that you can use to make your argument. You should find a combination that best expresses your argument and your support for it, and where your choice of audio and visual

presentation supports your work. You need an introduction and a body and a conclusion. This can take the form of a narrated slide show, an interview, a set of graphics, or something else. You sitting in front of a camera and talking probably wouldn't be the best option, because it doesn't take advantage of everything a video could offer. Sources could be dealt with in two ways: you could have a slide with sources at the end of your video, or you could include the sources with your link, as in the podcast example.

Blog Post: This is one of the most writing-intensive of the formats because text-heavy blog posts look a lot like papers, but there are some differences—you have to think about order and visuals differently than you do with a paper. Like a paper, this should move sequentially and flow from beginning to end. Unlike a traditional paper, this format asks you to intersperse visuals/embed videos or links into this text in a way that enhances (but doesn't interrupt) the text. You will probably use parenthetical in-text citations and you'll have a list of sources at the end. Any images or sound you use needs to be sourced ethically and cited appropriately.

Where To Get Help

If your professor is asking you to create a digital research project, they probably have a list of resources or have worked with a librarian at your school to create a list of helpful resources and links. Here is such a list, housed at the Georgia State University Library website: [GSU Library Digital Projects Resources](#)

If you're not part of a university community, you may have a subscription to a software and hardware self-teaching site such as Lynda.com that you (or your employer) has paid for. Remember that YouTube and other video sites such as Reddit have tutorials as well.

* Perimeter College students D. Charles and A. Mohammed contributed material that became part of "Jorge's" examples throughout this chapter, and D. Charles was the creator of the timeline linked above.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Grammar

6.1: Components of a Sentence

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6.1: Components of a Sentence

Components of a Sentence



A complete sentence consists of a subject and a predicate.

The subject is the word or group of words that names the person, place, thing, or idea that the sentence is about, and **the predicate** consists of the verb and any words that are necessary to complete its meaning. Both subject and predicate are necessary for the sentence to express a complete thought.

In a way, every sentence can be compared to a story. Like a story, a sentence must be about someone or something, and that person or thing must have something said about it.

In grammatical terms, a **complete sentence** is an independent clause, which is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate and can stand on its own as a complete thought.

Example:

I could not play in the basketball game.

In this sentence the subject is "I," and the rest of the sentence is the predicate.

Now consider this clause:

Because I sprained my ankle.

Here, also, the subject is "I," and there is a predicate, "sprained my ankle," but this clause is **dependent** (or **subordinate**), which means that in order to express its meaning completely it must be joined to an **independent clause**, as follows:

Example:

Because I sprained my ankle, I could not play in the basketball game.

As this example illustrates, a **dependent** (or **subordinate**) clause cannot stand on its own. It must be joined to an **independent clause** to make its meaning clear.

All complete sentences must contain at least one independent clause.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Capitalization

10.1: Capitals

10.2: Key Takeaways

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10.1: Capitals

Capitals



Rules for Capitalization

Always capitalize:

- the first word of a sentence;
- nationalities, races, languages, and religions (for example: American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist);
- days of the week, months of the year, and holidays;
- titles of positions when they are accompanied by proper names (for examples: President Obama, Governor Scott Brown, Judge Wheeler);
- the names of specific movements or events (for example: the Civil Rights Movement, World War II, D-Day);
- the letters that make up abbreviations for organizations or agencies (for example: FEMA, EPA, NFL, CNN);
- proper nouns (for example: the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals). Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way.

Table of Common vs. Proper Nouns

Common Noun	Proper Noun
museum	The Art Institute of Chicago
theater	Apollo Theater
country	Malaysia
uncle	Uncle Javier
doctor	Dr. Weaver
book	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
college	Georgia State University
war	The Spanish American War
region	West

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10.2: Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways

Capitalization

- Learning and applying the basic rules of capitalization is a fundamental aspect of good writing.
 - Identifying and correcting errors in capitalization is an important writing skill.
-

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Diction and Spelling

11.1: Prefixes

11.2: Suffixes

11.3: Commonly Confused Words

11.4: Slang, Cliche, and Overly General Words

11.5: Spelling Rules

11.6: Homonyms

11.7: Commonly Misspelled Words

11.8: Key Takeaways

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11.1: Prefixes

Prefixes



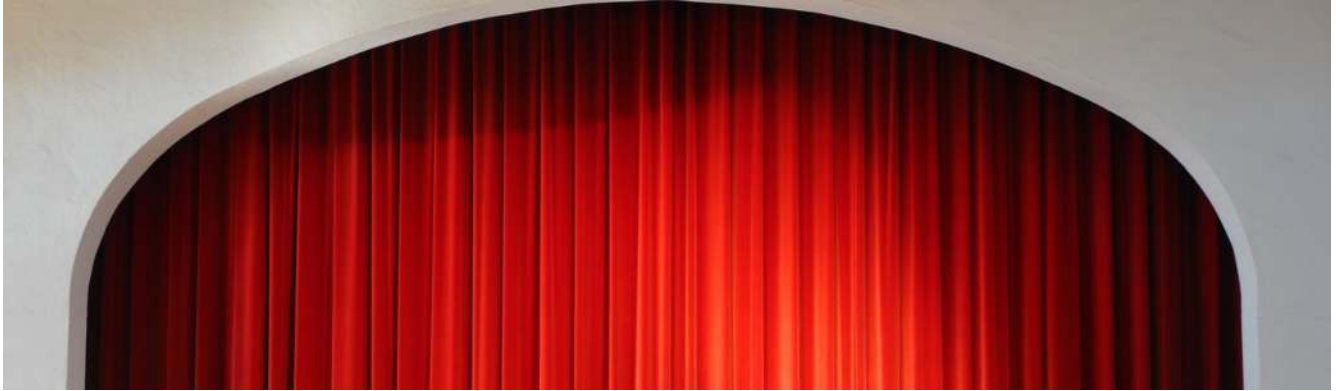
A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to create a new meaning.

The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is not to add letters or leave out any letters.

Table of Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
dis	not, opposite of	dis + satisfied = dissatisfied
mis	wrongly	mis + spell = misspell
un	not	un + acceptable = unacceptable
re	again	re + election = reelection
inter	between	inter + related = interrelated
pre	before	pre + pay = prepay
non	not	non + sense = nonsense
super	above	super + script = superscript
sub	under	sub + merge = submerge
anti	against, opposing	anti + bacterial = antibacterial

Exercise: Prefixes



Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach _____ comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his _____ matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt _____ glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those _____ aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's _____ standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a _____ natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to _____ locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to _____ act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the _____ cautions about watching my step.
10. A _____ combatant is another word for civilian.

Key Takeaways

Prefixes

- A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word that changes the word's form or part of speech.
- Learning the meanings of prefixes and suffixes will help expand your vocabulary, which will help improve your spelling and your writing.

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11.2: Suffixes

Suffixes



A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word to create a new meaning and a new part of speech. Study the suffix rules in the following boxes.

Rules for Suffixes

Rule 1

When adding the suffixes -ness and -ly to a word, the spelling of the word does not change.

Examples:

dark + ness = darkness

scholar + ly = scholarly

Exceptions to Rule 1

When the word ends in y, change the y to i before adding -ness and -ly.

Examples:

ready + ly = readily

happy + ness = happiness

Rule 2

When the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the silent "e" in the root word.

Examples:

care + ing = caring

use + able = usable

Exceptions to Rule 2

When the word ends in -ce or -ge, keep the silent e if the suffix begins with a or o.

Examples:

replace + able = replaceable

courage + ous = courageous

Rule 3
When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the silent e in the original word.

Examples:

care + ful = careful

care + less = careless

Examples:

true + ly = truly

argue + ment = argument

Rule 4

When the word ends in a consonant + y, change the y to i before any suffix not beginning with i.

Examples:

sunny + er = sunnier

hurry + ing = hurrying

Rule 5

When the suffix begins with a vowel, double the final consonant only if

(1) the word has only one syllable or is accented on the last syllable,

- and -

(2) the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.

Examples:

tan + ing = tanning (one syllable word)

regret + ing = regretting (The accent is on the last syllable; the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.)

cancel + ed = canceled (The accent is not on the last syllable.)

prefer + ed = preferred

Exercise: Suffixes



Write the correct forms of the words with their suffixes.

1. refer + ed

2. refer + ence
3. mope + ing
4. approve + al
5. green + ness
6. benefit + ed
7. resubmit + ing
8. use + age
9. greedy + ly
10. excite + ment

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11.3: Commonly Confused Words

Commonly Confused Words



Some words in English cause trouble for speakers and writers because these words share a similar pronunciation, meaning, or spelling with another word. These words are called "commonly confused words."

For example, read aloud the following sentences containing the commonly confused words new and knew:

I liked her new sweater.

I knew she would wear that sweater today.

These words may sound alike when spoken, but they carry entirely different usages and meanings. New is an adjective that describes the sweater, and knew is the past tense of the verb to know.

Recognizing Commonly Confused Words

New and knew are just two of the words that can be confusing because of their similarities.

The English language contains so many words; no one can say for certain how many words exist. In fact, many words in English are borrowed from other languages. Many words have multiple meanings and forms, further expanding the immeasurable number of English words.

Although the list of commonly confused words serves as a helpful guide, even these words may have more meanings than shown here. When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!

Strategies to Avoid Commonly Confused Words

When writing, you need to choose the correct word according to its spelling and meaning in the context. Not only does selecting the correct word improve your vocabulary and your writing, but it also makes a good impression on your readers. It also helps reduce confusion and improve clarity. The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

Use a dictionary. Keep a dictionary at your desk while you write. Look up words when you are uncertain of their meanings or spellings. Many dictionaries are also available online, and the Internet's easy access will not slow you down. Check out your cell phone or smartphone to see if a dictionary app is available.

Keep a list of words you commonly confuse. Be aware of the words that often confuse you. When you notice a pattern of confusing words, keep a list nearby, and consult the list as you write. Check the list again before you submit an assignment to your instructor.

Study the list of commonly confused words. You may not yet know which words confuse you, but before you sit down to write, study the words on the list. Prepare your mind for working with words by reviewing the commonly confused words identified in this chapter.

List of Commonly Confused Words



a		an		and	
a (article) Used before a word that begins with a consonant. Example: a key, a mouse, a screen		an (article) Used before a word that begins with a vowel. Example: an airplane, an ocean, an igloo		and (conjunction) Connects two or more words together. Example: peanut butter and jelly, pen and pencil, jump and shout	

accept		except	
accept (verb) Definition: to take or agree to something offered. Example: They accepted our proposal for the conference.		except (conjunction) Definition: only or but. Example: We could fly there except the tickets cost too much.	

affect		effect	
affect (verb) Definition: to influence or cause changes. Example: Hurricane winds affect the amount of rainfall.		effect (noun) Definition: an outcome or result. Example: The heavy rains will have an effect on the crop growth.	
		effect (verb) Definition: to cause something to happen. Example: The computer virus effected a collapse of the entire system	

are		our	
are (verb) A conjugated form of the verb "to be." Example: My cousins are all tall and blonde.		our (pronoun) Indicates possession, usually follows the pronoun "we." Example: We will bring our cameras to take pictures.	

by		buy	
by (preposition) Definition: next to. Example: My glasses are by the bed.		buy (verb) Definition: to purchase. Example: I will buy new glasses after the doctor's appointment.	

its		it's	
its (pronoun) A form of "it" that shows possession. Example: The butterfly flapped its wings.		it's (contraction) Joins the words it and is. Example: It's the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.	

know		no	
know (verb) Definition: to understand or possess knowledge. Example: I know the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers.		no Used to make a negative. Example: I have no time to visit the zoo this weekend.	

loose		lose	
loose (adjective) Definition: something that is not tight or is detached. Example: Without a belt, her pants are loose on her waist.		lose (verb) Definition: to forget, to give up, or to fail to earn something. Example: She will lose even more weight after finishing the marathon training.	

of		have	
of (preposition) Definition: from or about. Example: I studied maps of the city to know where to rent a new apartment.		have (verb) Definition: to possess something. Example: I have many friends to help me move.	
		have (linking verb) Used to connect verbs. Example: I should have helped her with that heavy box.	

quite		quiet		quit	
quite (adverb) Definition: really or truly. Example: My work will require quite a lot of concentration.		quiet (adjective). Definition: not loud. Example: I need a quiet room to complete the assignments.		quit (verb). Definition: to stop or to end. Example: I will quit when I am hungry for dinner.	

right	write
right (adjective) Definition: proper or correct. Example: When bowling, she practices the right form.	write (verb) Definition: to communicate on paper. Example: After the team members bowl, I will write down their scores.
right (adjective) Definition: the opposite of left. Example: The ball curved to the right and hit the last pin.	

set	sit
set (verb). Definition: to put an item down. Example: She set the mug on the saucer. set (noun) Definition: a group of similar objects. Example: All the mugs and saucers belonged in a set.	sit (verb) Definition: to lower oneself down on a chair or another place. Example: I'll sit on the sofa while she brews the tea.

suppose	supposed
suppose (verb). Definition: Means to think or to consider. Example: I suppose I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe. It can also mean to suggest. Example: Suppose we all split the cost of the dinner.	supposed (verb) The passive form of <i>suppose</i>. Definition: something <i>must, should, or is expected to</i> happen. Example: John was supposed [by his boss] to empty the fryers at the end of his shift. The experiment was supposed [by the scientists] to create a cure for cancer. The "by" phrase [shown in brackets] is usually left out, so it is easy to forget that <i>suppose</i> in these cases always requires an <i>ed</i> ending. Wrong: Susan was suppose to do her homework. Right: Susan was supposed to do her homework.

than	then
than (conjunction) Used to connect two or more items when comparing Example: Registered nurses require less schooling than doctors.	then (adverb) Definition: next or at a specific time. Example: Doctors first complete medical school and then obtain a residency.

their	they're	there
their (pronoun) Definition: Pronoun that shows possession. Example: The dog walker feeds their dogs everyday at two o'clock.	they're (contraction) Definition: combination of "they" and "are." Example: They're the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.	there (adverb) Definition: a particular place. Example: The dogs' bowls are over there. there (pronoun) Definition: Indicates the presence of something Example: There are more treats if the dogs behave.

to	two	too
to (preposition) Definition: Indicates movement. Example: Let's go to the circus. Definition: a word that completes an infinitive verb. Example: to play, to ride, to watch.	two (adj.) Definition: The number after one. It describes how many. Example: Two clowns squirted the elephants with water.	Too (adverb) Definition: also or very. Example: The tents were too loud, and we left.

use	used
use (verb) Definition: to apply for some purpose. Example: We use a weed wacker to trim the hedges.	used (verb) Definition: The past tense form of the verb "to use." Example: He used the lawnmower last night before it rained. used to (verb) Definition: something done in the past but not in the present. Example: He used to hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.

who's	whose
who's (contraction) Definition: Joins the words who+is, or who+has. Example: Who's the new student? Who's met him?	whose (pronoun) Definition: A form of who that shows possession. Example: Whose schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?

your	you're
your (pronoun) Definition: A form of "you" that shows possession. Example: Your book bag is unzipped.	you're (contraction) Definition: Joins the words you+are. Example: You're the girl with the unzipped book bag.

Key Takeaways

Commonly Confused Words

- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.
- Although commonly confused words may look alike or sound alike, their meanings are very different.
- Consulting the dictionary is one way to make sure you are using the correct word in your writing. You may also keep a list of commonly confused words nearby when you write, and you may study the list of commonly confused words in this chapter.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers.

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11.4: Slang, Cliche, and Overly General Words

Avoiding Slang



"Slang" describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English.

Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as emails, text messages, and instant messages.

Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

Exercise: Avoiding Slang



Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying "like" and "um," and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being up there. I feel like I've been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don't enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I'm surprised that people didn't boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Avoiding Cliches



Cliches are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused.

Writing that uses cliches often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding cliches in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.

1. **Cliche:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my blood boil.
2. **Plain:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
3. **Original:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Avoiding Overly General Words



General My new puppy is cute.	Specific My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.
General My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.	Specific My teacher, Ms. Atwater, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is unethical.

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11.5: Spelling Rules

Spelling Rules



Common Spelling Rules

The best way to master new words is to understand the key spelling rules. Keep in mind, however, that some spelling rules carry exceptions. A spell checker may catch these exceptions, but knowing them yourself will prepare you to spell accurately on the first try. You may want to try memorizing each rule and its exception like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

Write **i** before **e** except after **c**, or when pronounced ay like “neighbor” or “weigh.”

Example: achieve, niece, alien, receive, deceive

When words end in a **consonant plus y**, drop the **y** and add an **i** before adding another ending.

Example: happy + er = happier, cry + ed = cried

When words end in a vowel plus **y**, keep the **y** and add the ending.

Example: delay + ed = delayed

Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: day, lay, say, pay = daily, laid, said, paid

When adding **an ending that begins with a vowel**, such as -able, -ence, -ing, or -ity, drop the last e in a word.

Example: write + ing = writing, pure + ity = purity

When adding **an ending that begins with a consonant**, such as -less, -ment, or -ly, keep the last e in a word.

Example: hope + less = hopeless, advertise + ment = advertisement

For many words **ending in a consonant and an o**, add -s when using the plural form.

Example: photo + s = photos, soprano + s = sopranos

Add **-es** to words that end in **s, ch, sh, and x**.

Example: church + es = churches, fax + es = faxes

Tips to Improve Spelling Skills

1. Read the words in your assignment carefully, and avoid skimming over the page. Focusing on your written assignment word by word will help you pay close attention to each word's spelling. Skimming quickly, you may overlook misspelled words.
2. Use mnemonic devices to remember the correct spelling of words. Mnemonic devices, or memory techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or practices that help you remember. For example, the saying "It is important to be a beautiful person inside and out" may help you remember that beautiful begins with "be a." The practice of pronouncing the word Wednesday Wed-nes-day may help you remember how to spell the word correctly.
3. Use a dictionary. Many professional writers rely on the dictionary—either in print or online. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary, ask your instructor to help you find a "poor speller's dictionary."
4. Use your computer's spell checker. The spell checker will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool. See the introduction to this section for cautions about spell checkers.
5. Keep a list of frequently misspelled words. You will often misspell the same words again and again, but do not let this discourage you. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell, and you can add them to a list to learn to spell them correctly.
6. Look over corrected papers for misspelled words. Add these words to your list and practice writing each word four to five times each. Writing teachers will especially notice which words you frequently misspell, and it will help you excel in your classes if they see your spelling improve.
7. Test yourself with flashcards. Sometimes the old-fashioned methods are best, and for spelling, this tried and true technique has worked for many students. You can work with a peer or alone.
8. Review the common spelling rules explained in this chapter. Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules in this chapter again and again, as needed.



Remember to focus on spelling during the editing and revising step of the writing process. Start with the big ideas such as organizing your piece of writing and developing effective paragraphs, and then work your way down toward the smaller—but equally important—details like spelling and punctuation.

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11.6: Homonyms

Homonyms



Homonyms are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

Commonly Misused Homonyms

principle		principal	
Definition: principle (noun). A fundamental concept that is accepted as true. Example: The principle of human equality is an important foundation for all nations.		Definition: principal (noun). The original amount of debt on which interest is calculated. Example: The payment plan allows me to pay back only the principal amount, not any compounded interest.	
		Definition: principal (noun). A person who is the main authority of a school. Example: The principal held a conference for both parents and teachers.	
where		wear	ware
Definition: where (adverb). The place in which something happens. Example: Where is the restaurant?		Definition: wear (verb). To carry or have on the body. Example: I will wear my hiking shoes when go on a climb tomorrow morning.	Definition: ware (noun). Articles of merchandise or manufacture (usually, wares). Example: When I return from shopping, I will show you my wares.
lead		led	
Definition: lead (noun). A type of metal used in pipes and batteries. Example: The lead pipes in my homes are old and need to be replaced.		Definition: led (verb). The past tense of the verb lead. Example: After the garden, she led the patrons through the museum.	
which		witch	
Definition: which (pronoun). Replaces one out of a group. Example: Which apartment is yours?		Definition: witch (noun). A person who practices sorcery or who has supernatural powers. Example: She thinks she is a witch, but she does not seem to have any powers.	
peace		piece	
Definition: peace (noun). A state of tranquility or quiet. Example: For once, there was peace between the argumentative brothers.		Definition: piece (noun). A part of a whole. Example: I would like a large piece of cake, thank you.	
passed		past	
Definition: passed (verb). To go away or move. Example: He passed the slower cars on the road using the left lane.		Definition: past (noun). Having existed or taken place in a period before the present. Example: The argument happened in the past, so there is no use in dwelling on it.	
lessen		lesson	
Definition: lessen (verb). To reduce in number, size, or degree. Example: My dentist gave me medicine to lessen the pain of my aching tooth.		Definition: (noun). A reading or exercise to be studied by a student. Example: lesson was about mortgage interest rates.	
patience		patients	
Definition: patience (noun). The capacity of being patient (waiting for a period of time or enduring pains and trials calmly). Example: The novice teacher's patience with the unruly class was astounding.		Definition: (plural noun). Individuals under medical care. Example: The patients were tired of eating the hospital food, and they could not wait for .	
sees	seas	seize	
Definition: sees (verb). To perceive with the eye. Example: He sees a whale through his binoculars.	Definition: (plural noun). The plural of sea, a great body of salt water. Example: The tidal fluctuation of the oceans and seas are influenced by the moon.	Definition: (verb). To possess or take by force. Example: The king plans to seize all the peasants land.	
threw		through	
Definition: threw (verb). The past tense of throw. Example: She threw the football with perfect form.		Definition: through (preposition). A word that indicates movement. Example: She walked through the door and out of his life.	

11.7: Commonly Misspelled Words

Commonly Misspelled Words



The table below lists commonly misspelled words. You probably use these words every day in either speaking or writing. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the problem area of the word that is often spelled incorrectly. If you can, use this list as a guide before, during, and after you write.

Table of Commonly Misspelled Words

across	address	answer
argument	athlete	beginning
behavior	calendar	career
conscience	crowded	definite
describe	desperate	different
disappoint	disapprove	doesn't
eighth	embarrass	environment
exaggerate	familiar	finally
government	grammar	height
illegal	immediately	important
integration	intelligent	interest
interfere	jewelry	judgment
knowledge	maintain	mathematics
meant	necessary	nervous
occasion	opinion	optimist
particular	perform	perhaps
personnel	possess	possible
prefer	prejudice	privilege
probably	psychology	pursue
reference	rhythm	ridiculous
separate	similar	since
speech	strength	success
surprise	taught	temperature
thorough	thought	tired
until	weight	written

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11.8: Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways

Diction and Spelling

- Accurate, error-free spelling enhances your credibility with the reader.
 - Mastering the rules of spelling may help you become a better speller.
 - Knowing the commonly misused homonyms may prevent spelling errors.
 - Studying the list of commonly misspelled words in this chapter, or studying a list of your own, is one way to improve your spelling skills.
-

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Syntax

[7.1: Parts of a Sentence](#)

[7.2: Types of sentences](#)

[7.3: Common Sentence Errors](#)

[7.4: Parallelism](#)

[7.5: Appositives](#)

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7.1: Parts of a Sentence

Components of a Sentence



A complete sentence consists of a subject and a predicate.

The subject is the word or group of words that names the person, place, thing, or idea that the sentence is about, and **the predicate** consists of the verb and any words that are necessary to complete its meaning. Both subject and predicate are necessary for the sentence to express a complete thought.

In a way, every sentence can be compared to a story. Like a story, a sentence must be about someone or something, and that person or thing must have something said about it.

In grammatical terms, a **complete sentence** is an independent clause, which is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate and can stand on its own as a complete thought.

Example:

I could not play in the basketball game.

In this sentence the subject is "I," and the rest of the sentence is the predicate.

Now consider this clause:

Because I sprained my ankle.

Here, also, the subject is "I," and there is a predicate, "sprained my ankle," but this clause is **dependent** (or **subordinate**), which means that in order to express its meaning completely it must be joined to an **independent clause**, as follows:

Example:

Because I sprained my ankle, I could not play in the basketball game.

As this example illustrates, a **dependent** (or **subordinate**) clause cannot stand on its own. It must be joined to an **independent clause** to make its meaning clear.

All complete sentences must contain at least one independent clause.

Part of a Sentence



Compound Subjects

A sentence may have more than one person, place, thing, or idea as the subject. When this occurs, the sentence has a **compound subject**.

Example:

The students and teachers left the building when the fire alarm sounded.

In this example, the phrase "students and teachers" is a compound subject.

Prepositional Phrases

A **phrase** is a group of words that cannot function as a clause because it lacks either a subject, a predicate, or both. A **prepositional phrase** is a phrase that indicates a relationship of some kind (often a relationship of space or time) between the object of the preposition and another word.

Example:

The book was found underneath the couch.

In this example, "underneath the couch" is a **prepositional phrase**. The object of the preposition is "couch," and the preposition, "underneath," indicates the relationship between the subject of the sentence (book) and the couch.

Common prepositions include *in, on, of, under, near, by, with, and about*.

Participial Phrases

Just as prepositional phrases are built on prepositions, **participial phrases** are built on either the past or present participle of a verb. They are used as modifiers and usually describe nouns.

The **participles** commonly used in English are the **present participle** (the -ing form of verbs) and the **past participle** (the -ed form of regular verbs). Thus, "walking" and "walked" are the present and past participles of the **infinitive verb** "to walk." A participial phrase consists of the verb participle and any modifiers that go with it.

Example:

walking over rocky ground.

In this example, "walking" is the participle and "over rocky ground" (a prepositional phrase) completes the participial phrase.

Since many participial phrases contain the participle of an **action verb**, students sometimes confuse a participial phrase with the main verb of a sentence. Look closely, though, and you will see that the action word in a participial phrase is never a complete verb. It is usually only a past or present participle that lacks the helping verb it would need to form a predicate.

Example:

A young man staring at his cell phone bumped into me.

The subject of this sentence is "A young man," and there may seem to be two predicates, "staring at his cell phone" and "bumped into me." One of these, however, is only a participial phrase. How can you tell which one? If you remove the first of these two phrases, you get *A young man bumped into me*. This is clearly a complete sentence with a verb, *bumped*, in the past tense.

However, if you remove the second phrase, you get *A young man staring at his cell phone*. Is this a complete sentence? Compare it with this:

*A young man **was** staring at his cell phone.*

Only when we add **was** do we have a complete sentence. Why? Because **staring** cannot function as a verb without the helping verb **was** or **is**. So, in our original sentence, "staring at his cell phone" is a **participial phrase** used to describe the young man, and the **predicate** is "bumped into me."

Exercise: Subjects, Prepositions, and Participial phrases



Read the following sentences.

- Circle the subject or subjects,
 - underline any prepositional phrases, and
 - put double lines under any participial phrases.
1. The gym is open until nine o'clock tonight.
 2. We went to the store and bought some ice.
 3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
 4. The pickup truck, going way too fast, skidded on the ice.
 5. Anita sprinted over the finish line, winning the race with time to spare.
 6. People working for that company were surprised about the merger.
 7. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
 8. Studying intensely, Juan earned all A's last semester.
 9. A dog soaked with rain shook water all over the room.
 10. A man offering profuse apologies was gathering parcels strewn on the floor.

Key Takeaways

- A sentence is complete when it contains both a subject and verb (predicate). A complete sentence makes sense on its own.
- Every sentence must have a subject, which usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. A subject may be a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun.
A compound subject contains more than one noun.
- A prepositional phrase describes, or modifies, another word in the sentence but cannot be the subject of a sentence.
- A verb is often an action word that indicates what the subject is doing. Verbs may be action verbs (transitive or intransitive), linking verbs, or helping verbs.
Remembering the five basic sentence patterns is useful when correcting grammar errors.
- Fragments and run-on sentences are two common errors in sentence construction.
- Fragments can be corrected by adding a missing subject or verb or combining a dependent clause with an independent clause.
- Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding appropriate punctuation or using coordination or subordination.

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7.2: Types of sentences

Type of Sentences and Coordinating Conjunctions



Sentence Patterns

Most English sentences, no matter how long or complicated, make use of the following five basic sentence patterns:

PATTERN 1: SUBJECT + VERB

Example: The hammer fell.

The verb, "fell," in this type of sentence is **intransitive**, meaning that it does not require a **direct object**, as the **transitive verbs** do in Patterns 4 and 5. Also, not being a **linking verb** (see Patterns 2 and 3), it does not require a **complement**. It is possible, then, for a sentence using this pattern to be comprised of only a subject and a verb, as in this example. However, modifiers can always be added, making the sentence longer.

Consider this example: *The hammer fell with great force.* In this example "with great force" is a prepositional phrase added to describe (or modify) how the hammer fell. But, because this prepositional phrase is extra material that is not essential to the sentence's structure (the sentence is grammatically complete without it), this longer version is still an example of the basic Subject + Verb sentence pattern.

PATTERN 2: SUBJECT + LINKING VERB + NOUN

Example: The professor is an economist.

This pattern is distinguished by its use of a linking verb. The most common **linking verb** in English is "to be," which is conjugated as *is* in this example. In this pattern, the linking verb is used to rename the subject by linking it to another noun, as in this example where the professor is said to be an economist. This renaming noun is known as the **complement** of the linking verb.

PATTERN 3: SUBJECT + LINKING VERB + ADJECTIVE

Example: The athlete is tall.

As in Pattern 2, this pattern uses a linking verb "is" (to be) to connect the subject with a complement, but here the complement is an adjective, "tall," that describes the subject.

PATTERN 4: SUBJECT + VERB + DIRECT OBJECT

Example: The pitcher threw the ball.

The **verb** in this pattern is **transitive**: it requires that the action be performed on something or someone. In other words, something or someone receives the action of the verb (threw, in this example), and that thing or person is the direct object (the ball, in this example).

PATTERN 5: SUBJECT + VERB + INDIRECT OBJECT + DIRECT OBJECT

Example: The lobbyists gave the Congressmen money.

In this pattern, the **transitive verb** takes both a **direct object** and an **indirect object**. In this example, the direct object is "money" (because money is the thing that was given) and the indirect object is "Congressmen."

The indirect object identifies to whom (or which) or for whom (or which) the action is done. **The indirect object** is usually a noun or pronoun, and in this pattern it comes before the direct object. Usually a sentence using this pattern can be re-written in a form that places the indirect object in a prepositional phrase that comes after the direct object, thus: *The lobbyists gave money to the Congressmen.* Here the indirect object, the Congressmen, becomes the object of the preposition to.

Compound Sentences: Joining Clauses with Coordination

A compound sentence consists of two **independent clauses** joined by coordination. Coordination connects the two clauses in a way that emphasizes both clauses equally. Consider these two sentences:

Original sentences:

- I spent my entire paycheck last week.
 - I am staying home this weekend.
- In their current form, these sentences contain two separate ideas that may or may not be related. Am I staying home this week because I spent my paycheck, or is there another reason for my lack of enthusiasm to leave the house?

Revised Sentence:

- I spent my entire paycheck last week, so I am staying home this weekend.
- The revised sentence, utilizing the coordinating conjunction "so," illustrates that the two ideas are connected. Notice that the sentence retains two independent clauses (*I spent my entire paycheck; I am staying home this weekend*) because each can stand alone as a complete idea.

Coordinating Conjunctions

A **coordinating conjunction** is a word that joins two independent clauses. The most common coordinating conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Note that a comma precedes the coordinating conjunction when it joins two independent clauses.

Table of Coordinating Conjunctions

Independent Clause	Coordinating Conjunction	Independent Clause	Revised Sentence
I will not be attending the dance.	for (indicates a reason or cause)	I have no one to go with.	I will not be attending the dance, for I have no one to go with.
Posters announcing the dance are everywhere.	and (joins two ideas)	Teachers have talked about it in class.	Posters announcing the dance are everywhere, and teachers have talked about it in class.
Jessie isn't going to be at the dance.	nor (indicates a negative)	Tom won't be there either.	Jessie isn't going to be at the dance, nor will Tom be there.
The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance.	but, yet (both words indicate a contrast; but is more commonly used)	I don't think many people are going.	The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, but don't think many people are going.
I might go to the next fundraising event.	or (offers an alternative)	I might donate some money to the cause.	I might go to the next fundraising event, or I might donate some money to the cause.
Buying a new dress is expensive.	so (indicates a result)	By staying home I will save money.	Buying a new dress is expensive, so by staying home I will save money.



To help you remember the seven coordinating conjunctions, think of the acronym **FANBOYS**: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So.

Remember that when you use a coordinating conjunction to connect independent clauses, a comma should precede the conjunction. (Exception: the comma is sometimes left out when the clauses are short and closely related. Example: John drove and I gave directions.)

Conjunctive Adverbs

Another method of joining two independent clauses with related and equal ideas is to use a **conjunctive adverb** and a **semicolon**. Like coordinating conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs can join independent clauses and indicate a particular relationship between them, but conjunctive adverbs create a stronger break between the clauses than coordinating conjunction do.

Read the following sentences:

Original Sentences	Revised Sentence
Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics. She trains every day.	Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics; therefore, she trains every day.

Since these sentences contain two equal and related ideas, they may be joined using a conjunctive adverb. Notice that the conjunctive adverb comes after a semicolon that separates the two clauses and is followed by a comma.

Table of Conjunctive Adverbs

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Additional	also, furthermore, moreover, besides	Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.
Comparison	similarly, likewise	Recycling aluminum cans is beneficial to the environment; similarly, reusing plastic bags and switching off lights reduces waste.
Contrast	instead, however, conversely	Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take the train.
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; namely, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, thus	I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then	Tim crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.

Exercise: Combining Sentences with a Coordinating Conjunction or a Conjunctive Adverb



Combining Sentences

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using either a coordinating conjunction or a conjunctive adverb:

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor's building. He owns several cats and a parrot.
2. Texting and driving has caused countless car accidents. The state legislature recently outlawed cell phone use while driving.
3. Chinua won the local spelling bee. He is going on to the district contest.
4. Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Ashley carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car keys, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paperclip. He called the manufacturer for advice.

Joining Clauses with Subordination



Subordination joins two sentences with related ideas by combining them into an **independent clause** (a complete sentence) and a **dependent clause** (a construction that relies on the independent clause, also called the main clause, to complete its meaning). While **coordination** allows a writer to give equal weight to the two ideas that are being combined, **subordination** enables a writer to emphasize one idea over the other. Take a look at the following sentences:

Original Sentences

Tracy stopped to help the injured man.
She would be late for work.

Revised Sentence

Even though Tracy would be late for work, she stopped to help the injured man.

To illustrate that these two ideas are related, we can rewrite them as a single sentence using the subordinating conjunction, "even though."

In the revised version, we now have an independent clause, "she stopped to help the injured man," that stands as a complete sentence, and a dependent clause, "even though Tracy would be late for work," that is subordinate to the main clause.

Notice that the revised sentence emphasizes the fact that Tracy stopped to help the injured man, rather than the fact that she would be late for work. We could also write the sentence this way:

Tracy stopped to help the injured man even though she would be late for work.

The meaning remains the same in both sentences, with the subordinating conjunction, "even though," introducing the dependent clause.



To punctuate sentences correctly, look at the position of the main clause and the subordinate clause. If a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, use a comma. If the subordinate clause follows the main clause, no punctuation is required.

Exception: subordinate clauses that begin with conjunctions that indicate concession (see table below) are sometimes preceded by a comma, even when they follow the main clause.

Subordinating Conjunctions and Adverb Clauses

A **subordinating conjunction** is a word that joins a subordinate (dependent) clause to a main (independent) clause. Since the resulting subordinate clause modifies the verb in the main clause, the subordinate unit is called an **adverb clause**.

Subordinating Conjunctions Table

Function	Subordinating Conjunction	Example
Concession	although, while, though, whereas, even though	Sarah completed her report even though she had to stay late to get it done.
Condition	if, unless, until	Until we know what is causing the problem, we will not be able to fix it.
Manner (used to make a comparison)	as if, as though	The students in the conference room stopped talking at once, as though they had been stunned into silence.
Place	where, wherever	Where the trail split, our guide stopped, unsure of which route to take.
Reason	because, since, so that, in order that	Because the air conditioning was turned up so high, everyone in the office wore sweaters.
Time	after, before, while, once, when, as, as soon as	After the meeting had finished, we all went to lunch.

Exercise: Combining Sentences Using Subordinating Conjunctions



Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a subordinating conjunction:

1. A snow storm disrupted traffic all over the east coast. There will be long delivery delays this week.
2. My neighbor had his television volume turned up too high. I banged on his door and asked him to keep the noise down.
3. Jessica prepared the potato salad and the sauteed vegetables. Ashley marinated the chicken.
4. Romeo poisons himself. Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

Relative Pronouns and Adjective Clauses



While an **adverb clause** modifies the verb in an independent clause, an **adjective clause** modifies a noun. The modified noun may function in the sentence in any number of ways. It may be a subject, complement, direct object, or the object of a preposition.

Consider the following:

Original Sentences Jill and her friends camped near a silver mine. The mine had been abandoned for fifty years.	Combined Sentence Jill and her friends camped near a silver mine that had been abandoned for fifty years.
--	---

The second sentence modifies or tells about the silver mine, which is the object of a preposition (near) in the first sentence. We can turn the second sentence into a subordinate adjective clause and attach it to the first sentence.

The adjective clause is emphasized in pink. The adjective clause replaces the original subject of the second sentence (The mine) to form a subordinate adjective clause, and the clause is then attached to the first sentence, which becomes the main clause.

The relative pronoun in this example is "that." Like subordinating conjunctions, **relative pronouns** are used to make a clause dependent (or subordinate). Unlike subordinating conjunctions, relative pronouns take the place of another word, just as other pronouns do.

Unlike **adverb clauses**, which can be located either before or after a main clause, an **adjective clause** must be located immediately after the noun that it modifies. If this rule is not followed, the adjective clause becomes a **misplaced modifier** (see Parallelism).

The following words can all function as relative pronouns: who, whom, whose, which, that, when, where.

Restrictive and Nonrestrictive Adjective Clauses

An adjective clause is **restrictive** if it is essential for identifying (restricting) the noun that it modifies. A **nonrestrictive clause** may be important to the sentence, but it is not essential for identifying the noun. This distinction is important because nonrestrictive clauses must be set off from the main clause with commas.

Consider these examples:

Nonrestrictive Clause	Restrictive Clause
My brother Frank, who ran cross country in high school, beat everybody in the foot race.	A young man who ran cross country in high school beat everybody in the foot race.

Both these sentences contain the same adjective clause, "who ran cross country in high school," but in the first example the clause modifies a subject identified with a proper noun "Frank" and the designation "my brother." Consequently, the adjective clause is **not necessary** to the identification of the subject. It is **nonrestrictive** and set off with two commas, one before the clause and one after it.

In the second example, the subject is simply "A young man." Consequently, the adjective clause **is necessary** to the identification of who this particular young man is. The clause is **restrictive** and is not set off with commas (see comma use).

The table below illustrates relative pronouns and how they function to create adjective clauses.

Table of Relative Pronouns

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Relative Pronoun

Example (with adjective clause highlighted)

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My roommate, who is from Brazil, is majoring in physics.

Whom

Note: "Whom" is generally used only in formal writing. "Who" is often used in its place in colloquial English. When "whom" is used in a restrictive clause, it may be deleted from the sentence. Example:
The band leader hired a musician he had known in Ogden to play the harmonica.

The band hired Slim Swayze, whom the lead singer had known in Ogden, to play the harmonica.

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The Old Man and the Sea, which I read last year, tells the story of a fisherman in the Gulf of Mexico.

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that

Note: When *that* is used to replace a direct object, it may be deleted from the sentence. Example: The tacos I ate were delicious.

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The tourist blundered down a street that seemed to lead nowhere.

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Audrey and I recalled the time when we played together on the volleyball team.

u l a r t i m e .	
C r e a t e s a c l a u s e t h a t m o d ewhere f i e s a p a r t i c u l a r p l a c e .	Joe spent spring break in North Carolina, where his cousins live.
whose n d i c a t e s a c o n d i t i o n o f	An elderly woman whose car had been stolen sat on a bench in the police station.

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Exercise: Combining Sentences with Coordination and Subordination



Use coordination and/or subordination to combine each set of simple sentences into a single sentence.

1. Heroin is an extremely addictive drug. Thousands of heroin addicts die each year.
2. Shakespeare's writing is still relevant today. He wrote about timeless themes. These themes include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.
3. Gay marriage was first legal in the U.S in the six states of Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Other states followed their example.
4. Prewriting is a vital stage of the writing process. Prewriting helps you organize your ideas. Types of prewriting include outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping.
5. Mitch drank a strange potion. It transformed him into a cat. He ate an entire bag of cat food. His cat watched him hungrily.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Coordination and subordination join two sentences with related ideas. Coordination joins sentences with related and equal ideas, whereas subordination joins sentences with related but unequal ideas.
- Sentences can be coordinated using either a coordinating conjunction and a comma or a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon.
- Subordinate adverb clauses are made by the use of a subordinating conjunction.
- In a sentence with an adverb clause, a comma is generally used to separate the main clause from the dependent clause if the dependent clause is placed at the beginning of the sentence.

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7.3: Common Sentence Errors

Fragments



A fragment occurs when a group of words that does not form a complete sentence is punctuated as though it is a complete sentence. Here are three common types of fragments and ways to correct them:

The fragment may lack a predicate because the verb is incomplete.

Fragment

The runners staggering in the 100-degree heat.

Complete Sentence

The runners were staggering in the 100-degree heat.

Note: The present participle, "staggering," is not a complete verb without the helping verb "were."

The fragment may be a dependent (subordinate) clause that needs to be attached to an independent clause.

Fragment

Unless she could earn the money for tuition.

Complete Sentence

Unless she could earn the money for tuition, she would have to drop out of school.

Note: The fragment here is an adverb clause and does not express a complete thought unless it is attached to an independent clause.

Fragment

Which was the best thing to do.

Complete Sentence

My sister decided to sell the house, which was the best thing to do.

(Note: The fragment here is an adjective clause and does not express a complete thought unless it is attached to an independent clause. See section 7.4.)

The fragment may be a subject with modifiers that needs a linking verb.

Fragment

Doubt and mistrust everywhere, fogging the minds of managers and workers alike.

Complete Sentence

Doubt and mistrust were everywhere, fogging the minds of managers and workers alike.

Note: *Were* supplies the needed linking verb in this sentence. *Fogging* may seem like a verb, but it is only part of a participial phrase and cannot stand alone.

Run-on Sentences

Sentences with two or more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as **run-on sentences**. A run-on sentence may be either a fused sentence or a comma splice.

Fused sentence: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

Notice that there are two sentences here, one about a family of foxes, which ends with the word *shed*, and another about the young foxes. These two sentences are simply run together without any punctuation, coordination, or subordination, creating a fused sentence.

Comma splice: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

Here the break between the two sentences is marked with only a comma. Since a comma is not a legitimate way to connect independent clauses, this creates a comma splice.

Correcting Run-ons with Punctuation

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation.

- Adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences.
- Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will correct the error. Note: A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses.
- Coordinating conjunctions (remember FANBOYS).
- Subordination can also be used to fix run-ons.

Run-On (fused sentence)

The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Corrected Sentence

The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a conjunctive adverb to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the conjunctive adverb and follow it with a comma (see Compound Sentences).

Run-On (fused sentence)

The project was put on hold, we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Corrected Sentence

The project was put on hold; however, we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Exercise: Identify Common Sentence Errors



Use what you have learned so far to identify common sentence errors. Label each sentence as a fragment (F), a run-on sentence (R), or a correct, complete sentence (C) in the space before each. Write corrected sentences on the lines below fragments and run-ons.

1. ____ Being absent hurts a student's grade, he or she should be in class every day.

2. ____ Having been interested in science most of her life, she did well in Biology 101.

3. ____ Hurry with your breakfast, you will miss the bus.

4. ____ Several students had the right answer; however, most of them failed the exam.

5. ____ Several girls expressed concerns about course selections, therefore, changes were made.

6. ____ Jim practiced the violin daily, he wanted to excel in music.

7. ____ The child loved his mother, but he did not want to obey her.

8. ____ I had a severe case of the flu last year.

9. ____ And spent the first three days of my illness in bed.

10. ____ Because I was sick of my bed and decided I would lie on the sofa and watch television.

11. ____ Only getting up to take care of the necessities of life.

12. ____ Then I must have fallen asleep.

13. ____ When I was suddenly conscious again.

14. ____ The wind howled outside, the house was damp and chilly, and my fever soared.

15. ____ Then, somewhere in the blackness ahead of me, I saw a spot of light.

16. ____ Because I was sure that I had died.

17. ____ Running a temperature between 102 and 107.

18. ____ Voting is a privilege, this privilege should not be taken for granted.

19. ____ Be ready for any emergency, plan ahead.

20. ____ What has happened to the economy, many Americans want the answer to this question.

21. ____ A friend is always willing to help, friendship is invaluable.

22. ____ Although he was sick, James came to class.

23. ____ He arrived at the office late, then he realized he had left his laptop at home.

24. ____ We were excited about the game, and we won.

25. ____ Be careful with your answer, your grade could be affected.



When a participial phrase, prepositional phrase, or other modifying unit is not placed next to the noun it describes, the resulting error is called a **misplaced modifier**. Consider these examples:

Two Panels start copy

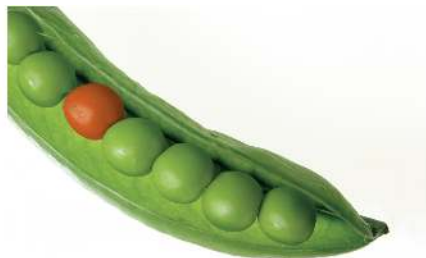
Incorrect Turning on the kitchen light, the woman surprised the thief in her nightgown.	Correct Turning on the kitchen light, the woman in her nightgown surprised the thief.
Incorrect They adopted a kitten for my brother called Shadow.	Correct They adopted a kitten called Shadow for my brother.
Incorrect The patient was referred to the physician with stomach pains.	Correct The patient with stomach pains was referred to the physician.

Simple modifiers like *only*, *almost*, *just*, *nearly*, and *barely* often get used incorrectly because writers often put them in the wrong place.

Incorrect Tyler almost found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.	Correct Tyler found almost fifty cents under the sofa cushions.
---	---

How do you almost find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer.

Exercise: Misplaced Modifiers



Rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers:

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby he called "Speed Racer."
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn't drink or smoke.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

Dangling Modifiers



A **dangling modifier** (or simply a dangler) is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, then the modifier is said to dangle.

Incorrect

Riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by.

Correct

As Jane was riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by.

In the incorrect sentence, **riding in the sports car** is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader.

Incorrect

Walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct

As Jonas was walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

-or-

The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was walking home at night.

In the incorrect sentence **walking home at night** is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

Incorrect

To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

Correct

If we want to win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

In the incorrect sentence, **to win the spelling bee** is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do.



Following these steps will help you correct a dangling modifier:

Look for a modifying phrase at the beginning of your sentence and underline the noun that immediately follows it. If the modifying phrase does not describe the underlined noun, then you have a dangler.

The example below opens with a participial phrase:

Incorrect

Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished.

Correct

Painting for three hours at night, Maggie finally finished the kitchen.

The kitchen is the room that was painted, but who did the painting? A noun referring to that person should immediately follow the participial phrase. Since Maggie did the painting, her name follows the participial phrase.

Exercise: Repair the Dangling Modifiers



Rewrite the following sentences to correct the dangling modifiers:

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Reading Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, decisions are becoming difficult.
3. Walking in the dark, a picture was knocked off the wall.
4. Playing my guitar in the bedroom, the cat darted under the bed.
5. Planning for the soccer tournament, time was short.
6. Living in Mexico, learning Spanish was easy.
7. Driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog whined nervously.
8. With sky-rocketing crime rates, I moved to a quiet village.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Exercise: Correct the Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers



Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers:

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down

smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Key Takeaways



Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers distract the reader.
- There are several effective ways to identify and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

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7.4: Parallelism

What Is Parallelism?



Parallelism is the use of similar structure in related words, clauses, or phrases. It creates a sense of rhythm and balance within a sentence. As readers, we often correct faulty parallelism—a lack of parallel structure—intuitively because an unbalanced sentence sounds awkward and poorly constructed.

Read the following sentences aloud:

- Kelly had to iron, do the washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.
- Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and to have good eyesight.
- Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. Although they are factually correct, the construction is clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used. In the second and third examples, the writer begins each sentence by using a noun (coordination, jeans), but ends with a phrase (to have good eyesight, wearing a suit).

Now read the same three sentences that have correct parallelism.

- Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.
- Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight.
- Ali prefers wearing jeans to wearing a suit.

When these sentences are written using parallel structure, they sound more aesthetically pleasing because they are balanced. Repetition of grammatical construction also minimizes the work the reader has to do to decode the sentence.



A simple way to check for parallelism in your writing is to make sure you have paired nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, and so on. Underline each element in a sentence and check that the corresponding element uses the same grammatical form.

Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

When you connect two phrases or clauses using a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so), make sure that the same grammatical structure is used on each side of the conjunction.

Take a look at the following example:

Faulty Parallelism

When I walk the dog, I like to listen to music and talking to friends on the phone.

Correct Parallelism

When I walk the dog, I like listening to music and talking to friends on the phone.

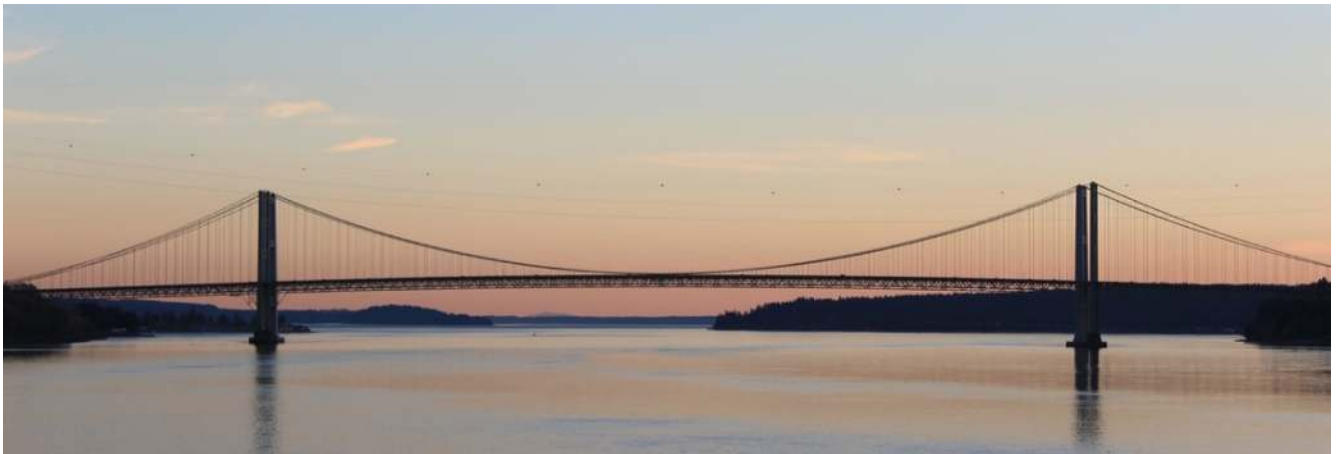
The first sentence uses two different verb forms (to listen, talking). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (and) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series.

Faulty Parallelism	Correct Parallelism
This committee needs to decide whether the company should reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lowering workers' wages.	This committee needs to decide whether the company should reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lower workers' wages.

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (reduce, cut) and a third item that uses a different verb form (lowering). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

Exercise: Revise for Parallel Structure



Revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using coordinating conjunctions:

1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and to play his guitar on weekends.
2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet.
4. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer email queries.

Creating Parallelism Using Than or As



When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure. Comparing two items without using parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being compared. Comparisons frequently use the words than or as, and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel.

Take a look at the following example:

Faulty Parallelism Swimming in the ocean is more difficult than a pool.	Correct Parallelism Swimming in the ocean is more difficult than swimming in a pool.
---	--

In the first sentence, the elements before the comparison word (than) are not equal to the elements after the comparison word. It appears that the writer is comparing an action (swimming) with a noun (a pool).

In the second sentence, the writer uses the same grammatical construction to create a parallel structure. This clarifies that an action is being compared with another action.

To correct some instances of faulty parallelism, it may be necessary to add or delete words in a sentence.

Faulty Parallelism A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as going for a run.	Correct Parallelism Going for a brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as going for a run. - or - A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as a run.
---	--

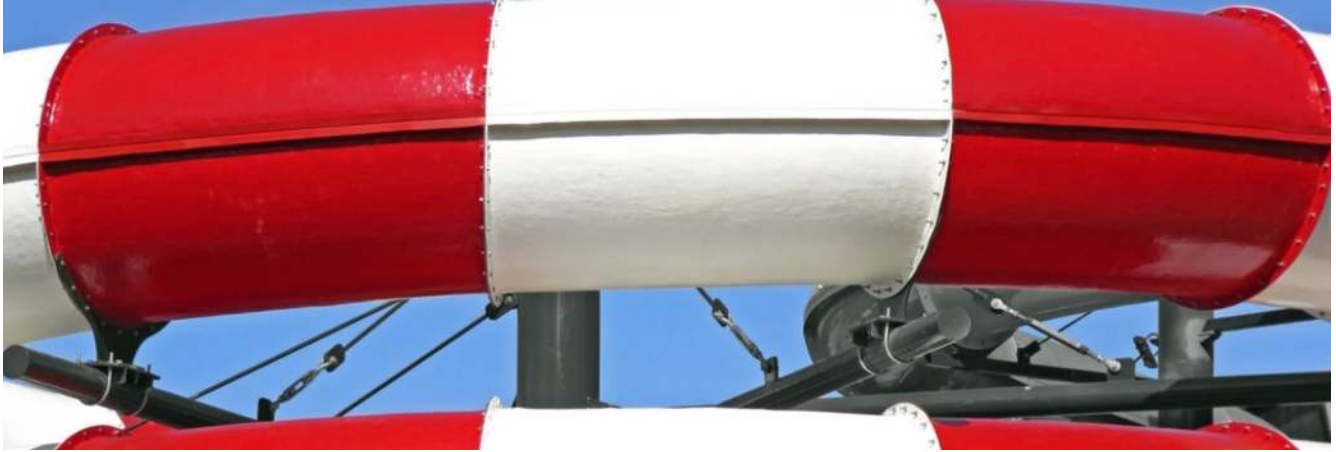
Exercise: Revising for Parallel Structure Using Than or As



Revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using than or as:

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.
3. The firefighter spoke more of his childhood than he talked about his job.
4. Indian cuisine is far tastier than the food of Great Britain.
5. Jim's opponent was as tall as Jim and he carried far more weight.

Key Takeaways



Parallelism

- Parallelism creates a sense of rhythm and balance in writing by using the same grammatical structure to express equal ideas.
- Faulty parallelism occurs when elements of a sentence are not balanced, causing the sentence to sound clunky and awkward.
- Parallelism may be created by connecting two clauses or making a list using coordinating conjunctions; by comparing two items using *than* or *as*; or by connecting two parts of a sentence using correlative conjunctions.

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7.5: Appositives

Incorporating Appositives into your Writing



An appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

Original Sentences

Harland Sanders began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930.
He is Colonel Sanders or “the Colonel.”

Revised Sentence

Harland Sanders, “the Colonel,” began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930.

In the revised sentence, “the Colonel” is an appositive because it renames Harland Sanders.

To combine two sentences using an appositive, drop the subject and verb from the sentence that renames the noun and turn it into a phrase. Note that in the previous example, the appositive is positioned immediately after the noun it describes. An appositive must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers.

Appositive after Noun:

Scott, a poorly trained athlete, was not expected to win the race.

Appositive before Noun:

A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race.

Unlike adjective clauses and participial phrases, which may be restrictive or nonrestrictive, appositives are always nonrestrictive, and thus they are always set off by commas. A comma is placed both before and after the appositive.

Exercise: Appositives



Rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using any of the techniques you have learned in this section:

1. Baby sharks are called pups. Pups can be born in one of three ways
2. The Pacific Ocean is the world's largest ocean. It extends from the Arctic in the north to the Southern Ocean in the south.
3. Michael Phelps won eight gold medals in the 2008 Olympics. He is a champion swimmer.
4. Ashley introduced her colleague Dan to her husband, Jim. She speculated that the two of them would have a lot in common.
5. Cacao is harvested by hand. It is then sold to chocolate-processing companies at the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Verbs

8.1: Verb Forms

8.2: Passive Verb

8.3: Gerunds and Infinitives

8.4: Modals

8.5: Phrasal Verbs

8.6: Subject-Verb Agreement

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8.1: Verb Forms

Verb Forms



You must always use a verb in every sentence you write. **Verbs are parts of speech that indicate actions or states of being.** The most basic sentence structure is a subject followed by a verb. Correct use of verb tenses and forms is very important in English. Verbs carry much of the main meaning of the sentence, and verb suffixes and auxiliaries indicate the time. Verbs are the powerhouses of our language.

There are two main types of verb errors. Try to distinguish between the two types.

Verb Form is an error where the tense has been incorrectly formed. **Verb Tense** is an error where an incorrect tense has been chosen for the meaning. Although the grammar of verbs is very complex in English, every student can easily learn the basic grammar and be able to use verbs correctly.

English verbs have five forms:

Base	Past	Past Participle	Progressive/Continuous	3rd Person Singular
Regular WALK	WALKED	WALKED	WALKING	WALKS
Irregular EAT	ATE	EATEN	EATING	EATS

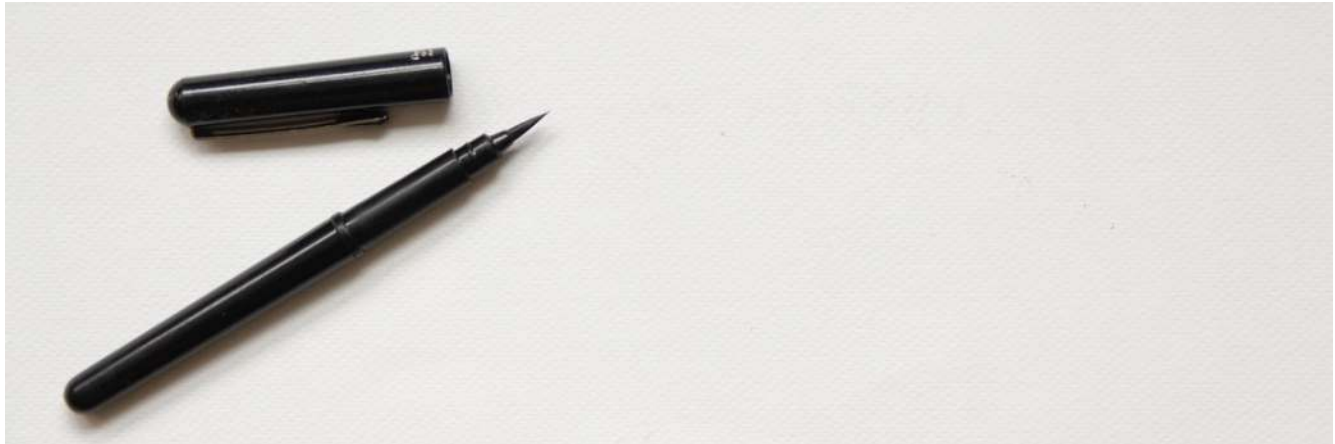
Some Verb Form Rules to Know

Verb Form Rules	Examples
Infinitive = to + base form	to run, to hide, to show
Modal = modal + base form	can run, could hide, should show
Do Support = do, does, did + base form	did run, doesn't hide, did show
Progressive = "to be" + base + ing	am running, was hiding, are doing
Perfect = have, has, had + past participle	have run, has hidden, had shown
Passive = "to be" + past participle	is built, was written, are being done

Active Forms of the 12 English Tenses of the regular verb "WALK"

	Past	Present	Future
SIMPLE	WALKED	WALK/S	WILL WALK
PROGRESSIVE	WAS /WERE WALKING	AM/IS/ARE WALKING	WILL BE WALKING
PERFECT	HAD WALKED	HAS/HAVE WALKED	WILL HAVE WALKED
PERFECT-PROGRESSIVE	HAD BEEN WALKING	HAS/HAVE BEEN WALKING	WILL HAVE BEEN WALKING

Simple Verbs



Simple Verb Tenses

Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place. The action could be in the past, present, or future. These are called Time Frames.

Past	← Present →	Future
Yesterday I jumped.	Today I jump.	Tomorrow I will jump.

Simple Present Verbs

Simple present verbs are used in the following situations:

When the action takes place now.

Example: I drink the water greedily.

When the action is something that happens regularly.

Example: I always cross my fingers for good luck.

When describing things that are generally true.

Example: College tuition is very costly.



When it is he, she, or it doing the present tense action, remember to add -s, or -es to the end of the verb; or to change the y to -ies.

Simple Past Verbs

Simple past verbs are used when the action has already taken place and is now finished:

- I washed my uniform last night.
- I asked for more pie.
- I coughed loudly last night.



When the action is something done in the past, remember to add -d or -ed to the end of regular verbs, regardless of the subject.

Simple Future Verbs

Simple future verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:

- I will work late tomorrow.
- I will kiss my boyfriend when I see him.
- I will erase the board after class.



"Going to" can also be added to the main verb to make it future tense: I am going to go to work tomorrow.

Exercise: Simple Verbs



Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct verb in the simple tense:

1. Please do not (erase, erased, will erase) what I have written on the board.
2. They (dance, danced, will dance) for hours after the party was over.
3. Harrison (wash, washed, will wash) his laundry after several weeks had passed.
4. Yesterday Mom (ask, asked, will ask) me about my plans for college.
5. I (bake, baked, will bake) several dozen cookies for tomorrow's bake sale.



If you have a compound subject like Marie and Jennifer, think of the subject as "they" to determine the correct verb form: Marie and Jennifer (they) have a house on Bainbridge Island.

Similarly, single names can be thought of as he, she, or it: LeBron (he) has scored thirty points so far.

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8.2: Passive Verb

Passive Verb Forms



Passive Voice

The passive voice can be added to verbs, creating a difference in meaning and a difference in grammatical form from the active voice. In a clause with an active verb, the subject is responsible for the action described, as in this example:

Faculty members often forget to lock their office doors when they go to the workroom to print something.

Who did the forgetting? The answer is the faculty members -- that is, the subject of the sentence. We know this because the verb is active. Look at the difference in the following example where the verb is passive:

Professor Mulden's purse was stolen from her office last week when she went to the computer room and forgot to lock her door.

Who did the stealing? Certainly, not Professor Mulden! She was not responsible for the action; she only suffered the effects. We know this because the main verb is in a passive form. To make verbs in the passive, combine the following parts:

Passive of the simple present:

Subject + am, is, are + past participle

A vote is taken

Passive of the simple past:

Subject + was, were + past participle

A vote was taken

Passive of the simple future:

Subject + will be + past participle

A vote will be taken

Passive of the present perfect:

Subject + has, have + been + past participle

A vote has been taken

Passive with modal:

Subject + must, could, can + be + past participle

A vote must be taken

Exercise: Active vs. Passive Verbs



Identify the following underlined verbs in sentences as active (A) or passive (P).

1. The jury voted at the end of the trial.
2. Some jurors were told to leave at noon.
3. All the jurors were leaving the building when the reporters came in.
4. My sister Joan has been selected for jury two different times.
5. Were you given any information about that murder case?
6. Not every juror will be needed for the trial next week.

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8.3: Gerunds and Infinitives

Gerunds



A gerund is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in -ing.

Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition. You can use a gerund in the following ways:

1. As a subject
Example: Traveling is Cynthia's favorite pastime.
2. As a direct object
Example: I enjoy jogging.
3. As an object of a preposition
Example: The librarian scolded me for laughing.

Often verbs are followed by gerunds. Examine the following table for examples.

Table of Gerunds and Verbs

Gerund	Verb Followed by a Gerund
moving	Denise considered moving to Paris.
cleaning	I hate cleaning the bathroom.
winning	Nate imagines winning an Oscar one day.
worrying	Mom says she has stopped worrying.
taking	She admitted taking the pumpkin.

Infinitives



An infinitive is a form of a verb that includes the word *to* and acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

to + verb = infinitive

Examples of infinitives include:

- to move,
- to sleep,
- to look,
- to throw,
- to read
- to sneeze

Often verbs are followed by infinitives.

Table of Infinitives and Verbs

Infinitive	Verb Followed by Infinitive
to help	Jessica offered to help her move.
to arrive	Mick expects to arrive early.
to win	Sunita wants to win the writing contest.
to close	He forgot to close the curtains.
to eat	She likes to eat late.

You may wonder which verbs can be followed by gerunds and which verbs can be followed by infinitives. With the following verbs, you can use either a gerund or an infinitive.

Table of Infinitives and Gerunds Verbs

Base Form of Verb	Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds and Infinitives
continue	1. He continued listening to the news. 2. He continued to listen to the news.
like	1. I liked leaving messages. 2. I liked to leave messages.
prefer	1. I prefer baking. 2. I prefer to bake.
start	1. I will start recycling immediately. 2. I will start to recycle immediately.
begin	1. John began crying. 2. John began to cry.
love	1. Josh loves diving. 2. Josh loves to dive.
hate	1. Marie hated talking on the phone. 2. Marie hated to talk on the phone.
try	1. Mikhail will try climbing the tree. 2. Mikhail will try to climb the tree.
forget	1. Wendell forgot paying the bills. 2. Wendell forgot to pay the bills.

Exercise: Infinitives and Gerunds



Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct infinitive or gerund:

1. I meant _____ (to kiss, kissing) my kids before they left for school.
2. The children hoped (to go, going) to a restaurant for dinner.
3. Do you intend _____ (to eat, eating) the entire pie?
4. Crystal postponed _____ (to get dressed, getting dressed) for the party.
5. When we finish _____ (to play, playing) this game, we will go home.

Key Takeaways

Verb Tenses

- Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place.
- Actions could be in the past, present, or future.
- There are six main verb tenses in English: simple present, simple past, simple future, present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect.

- Verbs in English can have active forms and passive forms.
- Verbs can be followed by either gerunds or infinitives.other pages.

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8.4: Modals

Modal Auxiliaries



Modal auxiliaries are helping verbs that are used only with a main verb to help express mood.

The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

Subject + modal auxiliary + main verb

James may call.

There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English.

Table of Modal Auxiliaries

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
can	Expresses an ability or possibility	I can lift this forty-pound box. (ability) We can embrace green sources of energy. (possibility)
could	Expresses an ability in the past; a present possibility; a past or future permission	I could beat you at chess when we were kids. (past ability) We could bake a pie! (present possibility) Could we pick some flowers from the garden (future permission)
may	Expresses uncertain future action; permission; ask a yes-no question	I may attend the concert. (uncertain future action) You may begin the exam. (permission) May I attend the concert (yes-no questions)
might	Expresses uncertain future action	I might attend the concert (uncertain future action same as may)
shall	Expresses intended future action	I shall go to the opera. (intended future action)
should	Expresses obligation; ask if an obligation exists	I should mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as ought to) Should I call my mother? (asking if an obligation exists)
will	Expresses intended future action; ask a favor; ask for information	I will get an A in this class. (intended future action) Will you buy me some chocolate? (favor) Will you be finished soon? (information)
would	States a preference; request a choice politely; explain an action; introduce habitual past actions	I would like the steak, please. (preference) Would you like to have breakfast in bed? (request a choice politely) I would go with you if I didn't have to babysit tonight. (explain an action) He would write to me every week when we were dating. (habitual past action)
must	Expresses obligation	We must be on time for class. (ought to) Expresses obligation I ought to mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as may)



Use the following format to form a yes-no question with a modal auxiliary:

Modal auxiliary + subject + main verb

Should I drive?

Common Errors

Be aware of these four common errors when using modal auxiliaries:

- Using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal
 - Incorrect: I can to move this heavy table.
 - Correct: I can move this heavy table.

2. Using a gerund instead of a base verb after a modal
 - a. Incorrect: I could moving to the United States.
 - b. Correct: I could move to the United States.
3. Using two modals in a row
 - a. Incorrect: I should must renew my passport.
 - b. Correct: I must renew my passport.
 - c. Correct: I should renew my passport.
4. Leaving out a modal
 - a. Incorrect: I renew my passport.
 - b. Correct: I must renew my passport.

Exercise: Common Modal Auxiliary Errors



Edit the following paragraph by correcting the common modal auxiliary errors:

I may to go to France on vacation next summer. I shall might visit the Palace of Versailles. I will to drive around the countryside. I could imagining myself living there; however,

I will not moved to France because my family should miss me very much.

Modals with Present Perfect Verbs



In the previous section, we defined the present perfect verb tense as describing a continuing situation or something that has just happened. Remember, when a sentence contains a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always "have."

Common Errors

Be aware of the following common errors when using modal auxiliaries in conditional statements:

- Using "had" instead of "have"
Incorrect: Jamie would had attended the party, but he was sick.
Correct: Jamie would have attended the party, but he was sick.
- Leaving out "have"
Incorrect: Jamie would attended the party, but he was sick.
Correct: Jamie would have attended the party, but he was sick.

Key Takeaways

Modals

Check List start copy

- The basic formula for using a modal auxiliary is: subject + modal auxiliary + main verb in the base form.
- There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English: can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, and ought to.
- The four common types of errors when using modals include the following: using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal, using a gerund instead of a base verb after a modal, using two modals in a row, and leaving out a modal.
- In the present perfect tense, when a sentence has a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always have.
- The two common errors when using modals in the present perfect tense include using had instead of have and leaving out have.

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8.5: Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal Verbs



Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs or phrasal verbs. It is important to remember that these expressions cannot be separated.

Table of Verbs + Prepositions

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	E x a m p l e
agree with	to agree with something or someone	M y h u s b a n d a l w a y s a g r e e s w i t h m e .
apologize for	to express regret for something, to say sorry about something	I a p o l o g i z e f o r b e i n g l a t e .

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	E x a m p l e
apply for	to ask for something formally	I w i l l a p p l y f o r t h a t j o b .
believe in	to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something	I b e l i e v e i n e d u c a t i n g t h e w o r l d ' s w o m

Verb + Preposition	Meaning
care about	to think that someone or something is important
hear about	to be told about something or someone

E
x
a
m
p
l
e
.
I
c
a
r
e
a
b
o
u
t
t
h
e
h
e
a
l
t
h
o
f
o
u
r
o
c
e
a
n
s
.
I
h
e
a
r
d
a
b
o
u
t
t
h
e
t
e
a
c

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	E x a m p l e
		h e r s ' s t r i k e .
look after	to watch or to protect someone or something	W i l l y o u l o o k a f t e r m y d o g w h i l e I a m o n v a c a t i o n ?

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	E x a m p l e
talk about	to discuss something	W e w i l l t a l k a b o u t t h e i m p o r t a n c e o f r e c y c l i n g .
speak to, with	to talk to/with someone	I w i l l s p e a k t o h

Verb + Preposition	Meaning
wait for	to await the arrival of someone or something

E
x
a
m
p
l
e

i
s
t
e
a
c
h
e
r
t
o
m
o
r
r
o
w
.

I
w
i
l
l
w
a
i
t
f
o
r
m
y
p
a
c
k
a
g
e
t
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a
r
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It is a good idea to memorize these combinations of verbs plus prepositions. Write them down in a notebook along with the definition and practice using them when you speak.

8.6: Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-Verb Agreement



Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that student writers make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

Basic Agreement

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

- **Number.** All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
- **Person.** All parts must match in first person (I), second person (you), or third person (he, she, it, they) forms.
- **Case.** All parts must match in subjective (I, you, he, she, it, they, we), objective (me, her, him, them, us), or possessive (my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours) forms.
- **Gender.** All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form.

Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in -s. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in --s.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
Third Person	He/She/It lives.	They live.
First Person	I live.	We live.
Second Person	You live.	You live.

In the singular form, the pronoun you refers to one person. In the plural form, the pronoun you refers to a group of people, such as a team.

Many singular subjects can be made plural by adding an -s.

Most regular verbs in the present tense end with an -s in the third person singular. This does not make the verbs plural.



Add an -es to the third person singular form of regular verbs that end in -sh, -x, -ch, and -s. (I wish/He wishes, I fix/She fixes, I watch/It watches, I kiss/He kisses.)

Irregular Verbs



Not all verbs follow a predictable pattern. These verbs are called irregular verbs. Some of the most common irregular verbs are be, have, and do. Learn the forms of these verbs in the present tense to avoid errors in subject-verb agreement.

Be

	Singular	Plural
First Person	I am.	We are.
Second Person	You are.	You are.
Third Person	He/She/It is.	They are.

Have

	Singular	Plural
First Person	I have.	We have.
Second Person	You have.	You have.
Third Person	He/She/It has.	They have.

Do

	Singular	Plural
First Person	I do.	We do.
Second Person	You do.	You do.
Third Person	He/She/It does.	They do.

Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when:

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as anyone or everyone;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as team or organization;
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing.

This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions and, or, or nor.

A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

- Compound subjects combined with and take a plural verb form.
- Compound subjects combined with or and nor are treated separately.

The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.



If you can substitute the word they for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Intervening Phrases or Clauses

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words.



The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

Indefinite Pronouns

When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form. However, keep in mind that exceptions arise.

Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form.

To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun.

Indefinite Pronouns that Always Take a Singular Verb

anybody, anyone, anything
each, everybody, everyone, everything all

Examples:

- All of the water has evaporated.
- All of the apples are ripe.

Indefinite Pronouns that Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb

nobody, no one, none, nothing
somebody, someone, something some

Examples:

- Some of the money was stolen.
- Some of the books were stolen.

Collective Nouns

Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb.

Example: The class respects the teacher.

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Example: Somewhere deep in the woods reigns the king of the elves.

In this example the verb (reigns) comes before the singular subject (king).

Here or There

In sentences that begin with here or there, the subject follows the verb. If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with here or there, it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

Example: There were many athletes training in the gym.

In this example the verb is were and the subject is athletes. (Note: training is not the verb of this sentence. training in the gym is a participial phrase. See Components of a Sentence.)

Questions

Many questions are formed with helping verbs whose form must agree in number with the subject:

Example: Are you going to the party tonight? Answer: Yes, I am going to the party.

The verb tense used in the question is present progressive (are going), and the subject (you) is placed after the helping verb are but before the present participle going.

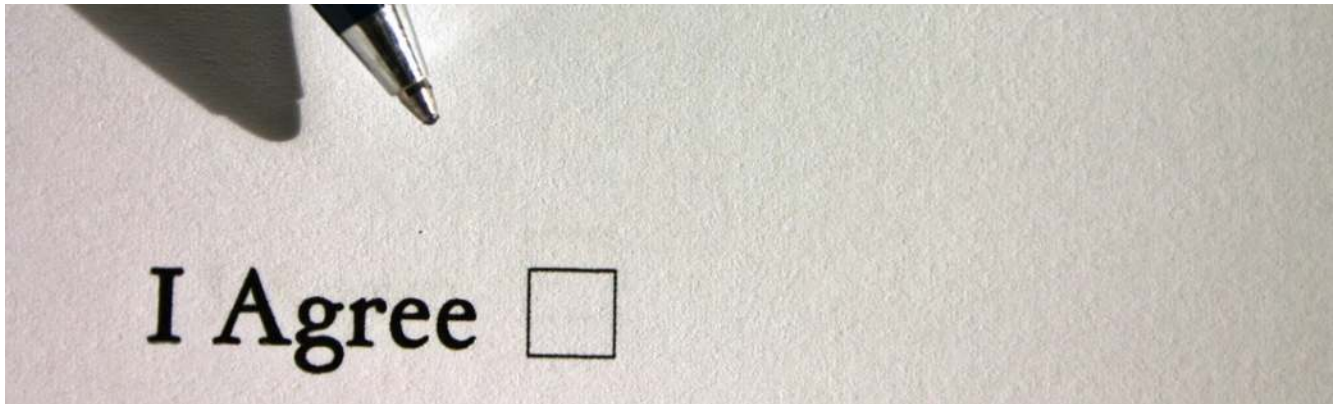
Example: Does your car run? Answer: Yes, my car runs.

In this example, notice that the s ending for the singular subject (car) appears at the end of the helping verb does in the question. In the answer to the question, the -s ending is attached to the verb run, and the helping verb is not used.



If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.

Exercise: Subject-Verb Agreement



Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write OK. Copy the corrected sentence or the letters OK on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1. My dog and cats chases one another all the time.

2. The books in my library is the best I have ever read.

3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.

4. My family are moving to California.

5. Here is the lake I told you about.

6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.

7. Which room is bigger?

8. When are the movie going to start?

9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.

10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

Exercise: Correct the Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement



Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following letter of application.

Dear Hiring Manager,

I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours.

My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success.

At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right.

My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me.

Here are my resume. You can reach me by email or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,

Jane Fellini

Key Takeaways

Subject-Verb Agreement

- Parts of sentences must agree in number, person, case, and gender.
- A verb must always agree with its subject in number. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb.
- Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern in their singular and plural forms. Common irregular verbs are to be, to have, and to do.
- A compound subject is formed when two or more nouns are joined by the words "and," "or," or "nor."
- In some sentences, the subject and verb may be separated by a phrase or clause, but the verb must still agree with the subject.
- Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form.
- Collective nouns require singular verbs.
- In sentences that begin with here and there, the subject follows the verb.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Pronouns

[9.1: Pronouns](#)

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9.1: Pronouns

Pronouns



Subject, Object, and Possessive Pronouns

Subject pronouns are often the subject of a sentence--who or what the sentence is about.

She loves the desserts in France. She is the subject. The feminine subject pronoun is she, and the feminine object pronoun is her.	By lunch time, they were hungry. They is the subject.
---	---

Object pronouns are often the object of the verb -- who or what was acted upon.

Melanie's thoughtfulness touched him. Him is the object of the verb touched. The masculine subject pronoun is he, and the masculine object pronoun is him.	We lifted it. It is the object of the verb lifted.
---	--

A pronoun that shows possession or ownership is called a possessive pronoun.

The teacher took her apple and left. The pronoun her shows the teacher owns the apple.	The hikers spotted their guide on the trail. The pronoun their shows the hikers follow the guide who was assigned to the hikers.
--	--

Table of Pronouns

Subject Pronouns	Object Pronouns	Possessive Pronouns
I	me	my (mine)
you	you	your(s)
he, she, it	him, her, it	his, hers, its
we	us	our(s)
they	them	their(s)

Exercise: Select the Correct Pronoun



Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.
8. My mother's singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Common Pronoun Errors



English language learners often make the same errors when using pronouns. The following examples illustrate common errors.

I/Me Incorrect Me and Daniela went to the restaurant for lunch. This sentence is incorrect because an object pronoun (<i>me</i>) is used instead of a subject pronoun.	I/Me Correct Daniela and I went to the restaurant for lunch. This sentence is now correct because a subject pronoun (<i>I</i>) is used.
Wrong Gender Incorrect Mark put her grocery bag on the counter. This sentence is incorrect because the pronoun <i>her</i> refers to a female, and Mark is a male.	Wrong Gender Correct Mark put his grocery bag on the counter. This sentence is now correct because the male pronoun <i>his</i> refers to the male person, Mark.
Repeated Pronoun Incorrect The woman she went to work earlier than usual. This sentence is incorrect because the subject the woman is repeated by the pronoun <i>she</i>.	Repeated Pronoun Correct The woman went to work earlier than usual. -or- She went to work earlier than usual. These sentences are now correct because the unnecessary repeated subject has been removed.

Exercise: Correct Common Pronoun Errors



Correct the following sentences that have pronoun errors. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. Us are going to the county fair this weekend.
2. Steven did not want to see a movie because she had a headache.
3. The teacher congratulated Maria and me.
4. The eighth grade students they were all behaving mysteriously well.
5. Derrick and he received the best grades on the grammar test.

Relative Pronouns



A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun that helps connect details to the subject of the sentence and may often combine two shorter sentences.

The relative pronouns are *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, *that*, and sometimes *when* and *where*.

First, Second, and Third Person Pronouns

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I am.	We are.
Second Person	You are.	You are.
Third Person	He/She/It is.	They are.

Exercise: Correct the Relative Pronoun



Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct relative pronoun.

1. He showed me a photo (who, that) upset me.
2. Soccer is a fast moving game (who, that) has many fans worldwide.
3. Juan is a man (which, who) has high standards for everything.
4. Jamaica is a beautiful country (that, who) I would like to visit next year.
5. My mother only eats bananas (who, that) are green.

Exercise: Combine Sentences Using Relative Pronouns



Combine the two sentences into one sentence using a relative pronoun.

1. Jeff is a dependable person. He will never let you down.
2. I rode a roller coaster. It was scary.
3. At the beach, I always dig my feet into the sand. It protects them from the hot sun.
4. Jackie is trying not to use so many plastic products. They are not good for the environment.
5. My Aunt Sherry is teaching me how to drive. She has never been in accident or gotten a ticket.

Key Takeaways

Pronouns

- A pronoun is used in place of a noun. There are several types of pronouns, including subject and object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and relative pronouns.
- Subject pronouns are the "who" and "what" the sentence is about. Object pronouns are the "who" and "what" that receives the action. A possessive pronoun is a pronoun showing ownership.
- Common pronoun errors include mixing up subject, object, and gender pronouns, and repeating the subject of a sentence with a pronoun. Relative pronouns help combine two separate sentences.

Pronouns and Antecedents



If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read.

We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like "Bob said that Bob was tired" or "Christina told the class that Christina received an A."

Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the "antecedent" of the pronoun.

Lani complained that she was exhausted.

She refers to Lani.

Lani is the antecedent of she.

Jeremy left the party early, so I did not see him until Monday at work.

Him refers to Jeremy.

Jeremy is the antecedent of him.

Crina and Rosalie have been best friends ever since they were freshman in high school.

They refers to Crina and Rosalie.

Crina and Rosalie is the antecedent of they.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular.

Agreement in Person

Singular Pronouns Plural Pronouns First Person I me my (mine) we us our (ours) Second Person you you your (yours) you you your (your) Third Person he, she, it him, her, it his, her, its they them their (theirs)

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Indefinite Pronouns and Collective Nouns



Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular.

Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular.



The pronoun "they " is often used for gender neutrality.

Common Indefinite Pronouns

all	any	anybody
anyone	anything	both
each	each one	each other
either	everybody	everyone
everything	few	many
neither	no one	nobody
none	none other	nothing
one	one another	oneself
others	several	some
somebody	someone	something

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular.

Common Collective Nouns

audience	band	class
committee	company	faculty
family	government	group
jury	public	school
society	team	tribe

Exercise: Select the Correct Pronoun



Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.

6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.
8. My mother's singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Who vs. Whom



Who or whoever is always the subject of a verb. Use who or whoever when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

- Who won the marathon last Tuesday?
- I wonder who came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, whom and whomever serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does not perform an action. Use whom or whomever when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

- Whom did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)
- From whom did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)



If you are having trouble deciding when to use who and whom, try this trick. Reorder the sentence in your head, using either he/she or him/her in place of who or whom.

If you can use him/her, you should use whom.

Exercise: Who or Whom?



Complete the following sentences by adding who or whom.

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.
8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

Key Takeaways

Pronouns

- A pronoun is used in place of a noun. There are several types of pronouns, including subject and object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and relative pronouns.
- Subject pronouns are the "who" and "what" the sentence is about. Object pronouns are the "who" and "what" that receives the action. A possessive pronoun is a pronoun showing ownership.
- Common pronoun errors include mixing up subject, object, and gender pronouns, and repeating the subject of a sentence with a pronoun. Relative pronouns help combine two separate sentences.

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Index

G

grammar

[6: Grammar](#)

Glossary

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

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 - [2: Introduction to Writing - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
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 - [2.2: Purpose, Audience, and Content - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [2.3: Using Sources - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [2.4: Writing Thesis Statements - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [2.5: Organizing Your Writing - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [2.6: Writing Paragraphs - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3: The Writing Process - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3.1: Prewriting - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3.2: Outlining - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3.3: Drafting - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3.4: Revising and Editing - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4: Rhetorical Modes of Writing - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.1: Rhetorical Modes of Writing - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.2: Description - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.3: Classification - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.4: Process Essay - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.5: Definition - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.6: Comparison and Contrast - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.7: Cause and Effect - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.8: Persuasion - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5: Composing a Research Project - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.1: The Purpose of Research Writing - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.2: Choosing Your Topic - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.3: Applying Your Research - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.4: Gathering Your Sources - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.5: Documenting Your Source Material - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.6: Revising Your Draft - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.7: Digital Research Projects - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [6: Grammar - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [6.1: Components of a Sentence - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [7: Syntax - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [7.1: Parts of a Sentence - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [7.2: Types of sentences - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [7.3: Common Sentence Errors - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [7.4: Parallelism - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [7.5: Appositives - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [8: Verbs - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [8.1: Verb Forms - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [8.2: Passive Verb - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [8.3: Gerunds and Infinitives - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [8.4: Modals - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [8.5: Phrasal Verbs - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [8.6: Subject-Verb Agreement - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [9: Pronouns - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [9.1: Pronouns - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [10: Capitalization - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [10.1: Capitals - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [10.2: Key Takeaways - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

- 11: Diction and Spelling - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 11.1: Prefixes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 11.2: Suffixes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 11.3: Commonly Confused Words - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 11.4: Slang, Cliche, and Overly General Words - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 11.5: Spelling Rules - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 11.6: Homonyms - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 11.7: Commonly Misspelled Words - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 11.8: Key Takeaways - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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 - Index - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - Glossary - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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