

ARGUMENT IN ACTION: ACADEMIC WRITING AND CRITICAL THOUGHT



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Argument in Action: Academic Writing and
Critical Thought

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Technical College

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Detailed Licensing

Licensing

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0.1: Messages are Arguments

Throughout this text, we explore arguments. When you hear the word argument, you might think of a conflict. You might imagine contention or loud voices. That is not what we are talking about.

When we talk about [argument](#) in an academic setting, we are talking about an assertion on a certain topic. Someone has a perspective that they would like to share and want others to agree with. A simple example is when you and your friends are trying to decide where to go for dinner on a Friday night. One person might want TexMex, one might want seafood, and one might want pub grub. Each friend has their reasons for what they want. So, they might try to convince the others to go to their restaurant. They are making an argument about their preferred choice of restaurant.

Arguments occur everywhere in modern society. Whenever words or images convey a message, there is an argument. It can be as subtle as a meme or as complicated as an academic article. When you watch Tik Tok, text friends, or search online, you encounter arguments. Arguments present ideas, thoughts, opinions, or claims. [Academic arguments](#) are formal arguments presented in a college setting. You will write for your peers and instructors. Your purpose will be to present well-written arguments that clearly communicate your ideas.

Throughout this course, you will read and write different types of arguments. You will practice critical reading skills to analyze and evaluate arguments. When you construct your argument, you will take a position on a topic and support it with scholarly evidence.

You will also study rhetoric and information literacy to message comprehension. You will also improve critical thinking skills and grow intellectually. Plus, you will successfully participate in academic conversations and write effective arguments.

0.2: What is a Text?



When we refer to a [text](#), we mean more than a formal document or short electronic message. We mean anything that conveys a message.

This could be a formal document, but it could also be an email or blog. It could also be visual like a gif, graphics, or an ad. A text can even be auditory like a song. When you encounter a text in college, you will examine, interpret, and engage the argument.

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0.3: What is an Essay?

In college writing classes, your instructor may ask you to write an essay. The word 'essay' comes from the French word “essayer,” which means to try or attempt. So what are we trying to attempt when writing an essay? In academic essays, we aim to share ideas, feeling, or claims through writing. Instead of simple reporting of facts, you will write to persuade your reader to accept your ideas. You will also practice rhetoric and information literacy to make your arguments stronger. All this comes together in a short piece of writing that conveys your message in a text we call an [essay](#).

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1.1: Active Reading

The reading you do in college differs from what you did in high school where you read for comprehension. You may have needed to learn information for a test or to write a paper, and you likely accepted what you read without question. We call this **passive reading**.

In college, however, you will be asked to read a variety of texts. Besides textbooks, you may read periodicals, government reports, or academic articles. When you read these things, you will need to consider, then question, what is being said. Then you may be asked research, write, or synthesize information to create new ideas. Before you begin these tasks, you need to engage with what you read, and the best way to do this is to read actively. **Active reading** is exactly what it sounds like; you are active, doing things, as you read.

Note the difference between passive and active reading side by side in this chart.

Passive reading	Active reading
Reading quickly to get it done.	Setting aside a time and place to read.
Reading without preparation.	Pre-reading by skimming and scanning.
Reading for comprehension only.	Uses strategies to understand subtext along with comprehension.
Having to repeat reading due to lost focus.	Maintaining focus through annotating.
Taking notes without discernment.	Taking notes with purpose.
Needing to repeat later because of forgotten content.	Summarizing when finished to retain and use information.

Effective reading, like writing, is a process. The following is a general overview of the reading process.

Steps in the reading process:

Before you begin, create a reading space. Find a place that is comfortable and free of distractions. Many people claim they can multitask. However, academic studies find that phones and noise increase distractions and decrease concentration. A consistent study place signals your brain that it is time to work, which will help you focus on your task.

Plan time to read. We are all very busy, so look through your schedule and carve out time just for reading.

Step 1: Pre-read

- Skim through the text to get an idea of the content.
- Note headings or sections.
- Break the reading into smaller sections to make the process easier.
- Scan the text for any highlighted or bolded words. Look up new vocabulary.

Step 2: Read.

- As you read, **annotate** your text as you go along. Annotating includes underlining, marking, adding definitions or notes, and writing in the margins.

Create a system that you will use every time you read. You can...

- Develop abbreviations or symbols to help such as ! for something important.
- Divide the content into smaller chunks to avoid overwhelm. Write short summaries as you complete them.
- Circle important ideas, arguments, and vocabulary.
- Underline or highlight sparingly.
- Look up unfamiliar words or concepts. Write the definition above the word.
- Write difficult concepts in your own words to be sure you understand.
- Write questions in the margins.
- Converse with the author. Use margins to make comments, ask questions, argue.
- If you are reading online, use highlight and comment tools.
- Take notes. Try different methods until you find one that works for you.

Methods for taking notes.

Mind mapping. Start with a key concept described in heading or opening sentences. Draw lines to show connections, branching off as you encounter information. See Fig. 1 below.

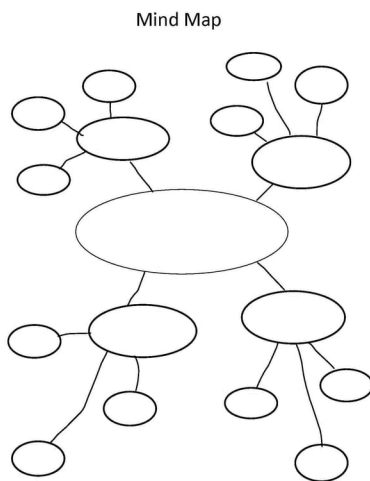
Outlining. Similar idea to mind mapping, but using an outline format. See figure 2.

Cornell method. Draw a vertical line 1/3 of the way from the left. Take notes on the right side of the line. Record corresponding vocabulary or key ideas on the left. Summarize at the bottom.

Listing or a table. You will organize information into columns. Put the key ideas at the top. Add information, definition, or related ideas underneath.

Figure 1

Figure 2



Step 3: Post read.

- Review your notes.
- Write a summary or summaries of smaller sections. This helps you with understanding and retention.

There are more specific strategies you can adopt to read and understand a text. You should try different strategies until you find one that works for you. You want strategies that are efficient and useful, so feel free to adjust them to your liking.

Writing Summaries

How to write a summary:

1. Read the text you want to summarize.
2. If it is a long text, break it up into more manageable parts.
3. Read the text again using your active reading strategy.
4. Write what you remember. Use your own words.
5. Review the text and your summary to check for missing information.

Additional Resources

This article from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill contains more ideas and some examples. Linked here: [annotation](#)

Here are some note-taking-strategies from North Carolina Chapel Hill linked here: [Note taking strategies](#)

Here two handouts from Washington University, St. Louis that may help with annotating and taking notes. Linked here: [Active Reading Strategies](#)

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[A_Brainstorming_Template](#)

1.2: Critical Reading

College reading includes two aspects [critical reading](#) and [active reading](#). While you're reading, you also want to think objectively about what you read. Read with a questioning eye and don't take everything at face value. As a 21st century adult, you know that not everything you read is accurate; so you need to be skeptical. You will especially to do this while researching online.

One way to go about this is to have a "conversation" with the author. Annotation works well for this.

1. Use the margin space to take notes, ask questions, and respond to ideas.
2. Check the article, author, or website for credibility. Who is the author? What are their credentials? Who is sponsoring the information?
3. Investigate anything in the text that seems unreliable, not credible, or questionable.
4. Check for bias and read between the lines.
5. Determine the argument that the author makes. Is it reasonable? Logical? Does it agree with other articles on the same topic?

After reading, reflect on what you've read or note ideas to follow up on. One way to reflect on what you've read is to *write a critical response*.

1.3: Critical Response

Writing a **critical response paragraph** is an effective way to engage with a text. This is an opportunity to take what you've read, look at it closely, and develop your own ideas. It is basically a quick analysis.

This is not a summary. A summary, though useful, simply reports without commentary or bias. A [critical response](#) interprets the text and uses evidence from the reading to support your interpretation.

A critical response is a quick, informal writing. It helps you to think about what you have read in a different way by finding a key idea and supporting that idea from the text. In the process, you will reflect on several ideas, discern which one is important, explain the idea, and find textual evidence.

Steps to write a critical response paragraph:

1. Start by choosing an specific idea discussed in the reading. You do not need to address the entire text or the overall argument. Focus on a single concept or stance made by the author.
2. Think about what the author meant. Ask questions such as "how" or "why." Don't just accept what the author says; instead, be skeptical and scrutinize the ideas. Look for bias or illogical thought.
3. Decide your opinion on the idea you've examined.
4. State your opinion in one sentence. Use it as your topic sentence of your critical response paragraph.
5. Develop your paragraph by explaining, adding evidence from the text, and relating it to what the author said.
6. Read your work, revise, polish, and share.

Writing a critical response paragraph helps develop critical thinking skills as well as reviewing information that you may need to remember later. It is a good journaling exercise also. Plus, it can be used in the research process to practice analysis and [synthesis](#).

Building a habit of reading and writing critically helps you engage your brain in news ways. You develop your critical thinking, reading, and writing skills, too.

Additional Resource.

More information is in this handout linked here: [How to Write a Critical Response Paragraph](#)

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Yow, Chris. "Critical Response Paragraphs." UWF Writing Lab, uwf.edu, <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:4b6a23a2-6855-408c-a6ab-c3310669dd57>

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1.4: Academic Writing- what it is and isn't

Using Academic Style Writing

Another higher level skill you will be practicing in college is academic writing style. This is a form of professional writing used in academia to improve comprehension and consistency across disciplines.

[Academic writing](#) is different from online writing in blogs, posts, or magazine articles. Writing in college means you will follow certain conventions and formats. You will also use is formal language, which usually uses third person and prefers active tense.

First of all, you will follow conventions of academia. This is to ensure consistency. You will know what to expect when you get a writing assignment or when you read academic articles.

The conventions of academic language are described by educator and author Andrea Lunsford as:*

1. Writing prepared for publication.
2. Clear pattern of organization.
3. Logical progression of ideas.
4. Credible evidence to support ideas.
5. Other perspectives.
6. Clear, direct style.
7. Discipline-appropriate conventions.
8. Citations and format that accurately follow guidelines.
9. Formal or professional language (see chart below).

*Borrowed from *Everyone's an Author* by Andrea Lunsford

In addition to using these conventions, you will use formal language.

Some people think academic writing means using big words and long sentences. This isn't necessarily the case. For example, sometimes students will use a thesaurus to find fancy synonyms for regular words. Often, when they do this, the words they choose do not mean the same thing as the original. There may a slight difference in meaning or include unintended connotations. It is better to use the vocabulary you know. If you want to improve your vocabulary so you know more fancy words, read a lot. Then using a bigger number of words will come naturally.

Informal Language vs Formal Language	
Formal	Informal
Third person.	First, second, or third person.
Precise words used.	Vague wording.
Clear, direct sentences.	Sentences that ramble or change directions.
Complete sentences.	Comma splices, run-ons, and fragments used.
Only necessary phrases and clauses.	Phrases or clauses linked together.
No contractions.	Contractions used.
Specialized or shared language used.	Informal, colloquial, or slang used.

Sometimes, you may get an assignment where [informal language](#) is acceptable. Your instructor usually indicates when this is the case.

In general, assume you should use academic conventions and formal language. If you are not sure, read the assignment carefully to see if the answer is in the instructions. If not, you should consult the syllabus before asking your instructor.

Works Cited

Lunsford, Andrea et al. "Meeting the Demands of Academic Language." *Everyone's an Author*, 2nd edition, W.W. Norton Company, pp 45-52.

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1.5: Towards Justice Language

Further thoughts on academic writing.

Even though we use formal language in academic writing, you may have noticed that using "correct" English is not in our discussion. This would be English with specific rules of grammar and usage, the kind of language taught in English textbooks. The technical name for this version is "[Edited American English](#)." Some people think that this is the only right way to speak or write English. To think that, however, is very narrow view of American English. The United States has a rich tapestry of English with many accents and dialects. These variations of English may differ from a textbook, but they are legitimate forms of English.

American English has evolved throughout United States' history. People arriving from different countries have created mixtures of their native language with English. For example, Louisiana French is a term for different dialects of English and French, mostly spoken in New Orleans and Southern Louisiana. The variations include influences from African, Native American, or Spanish languages. Tens of thousands of people speak these dialects today. Another example is Spanglish, which is a mixture of English and Spanish, spoken primarily in Hispanic communities. It is recognized as a legitimate form of English.

Other dialects are influenced by culture. For example, Black Americans may speak African American Vernacular English (AAVE). It is not "urban slang" or bad grammar. AAVE has its own grammar and usage rules. You often hear it in big cities, but its cultural influence and vocabulary have spread throughout the US. Sometimes words or phrases are appropriated by other English speakers. While this is not ideal, it does demonstrate the influence AAVE has had on American culture.

When Americans who speak a dialect are expected to use Edited American English, they must "code-switch." This means they need to speak a different language to fit in. This is a form of injustice as it requires someone to change who they are to be accepted. "Language Justice" is a way to appreciate and welcome everyone's language. It is an evolving concept that values diversity, accepts all forms of English, and aims to dismantle language-based oppression. For people in writing classes, Language Justice means all types of English are welcome to our academic conversations.

As scholars, we use language that fits our audience and purpose. In college, that means we all adjust the formality of our writing, depending on our assignment. Most written papers require formal language because clarity and consistency is needed when people from different places and disciplines read our work. While we want to meet these expectations, good writing doesn't have to look the same for everyone. Allowing people to use their authentic voices and vocabulary might bring fresh ideas or insight to our academic conversations. Including Justice Language could be beneficial and educational for everyone.

Exercise 1.5.1

Write a short journal response to the questions below. You do not have to answer all of the questions; use them as a springboard for your own ideas. A journal response is usually personal and informal, so you don't need to worry about writing conventions.

What do you think of Language Justice in academia? How would you feel if you came across a different dialects written into an academic article? Do you think you could understand a term from Louisiana French or a Spanish word? How would that work? Do you think there is room for a variety of English dialects in formal writing? Or does it need to be restricted for clarity and consistency?

1.6: Questions for reflection

Use the following questions to review the chapter and think about what you learned.

1. How do academic arguments differ from arguments you might see or have outside of college?
2. How do active and critical reading work together to help you get the most out of reading?
3. What reading and note-taking strategies have I explored? Which do I like the best and plan on using?
4. How can I use summarizing and critical response writing in preparation for writing an essay on the same text?
5. What is the difference between formal and informal writing? How do I need to adjust my writing for formal writing assignments?
6. What do you think about justice language? Should individuals be allowed to use their own forms of English when writing academic papers?

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2: RHETORIC

Introduction.

If it is an election year, you might hear people talk about empty or hostile [rhetoric](#). Someone might accuse you of using rhetoric, or they might say “that’s just rhetoric.” Often people don’t understand what rhetoric is, so they mix it up with propaganda. Propaganda uses rhetoric to convey its messages, but they are not the same thing. By the end of the chapter, you should be able to define and differentiate between the two.

Besides the definitions of rhetoric and propaganda, we will cover many aspects of how rhetoric is used. You will encounter the rhetorical situation; learn the elements of the rhetorical triangle; identify the rhetorical appeals, and use all of those in a rhetorical analysis.

Chapter goals.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to

1. Define rhetoric.
2. Identify rhetoric in texts.
3. Define the rhetorical situation.
4. Identify the aspects of a rhetorical situation.
5. Identify three rhetorical appeals.
6. Describe how the rhetorical triangle depicts communication.

To meet these goals, we will discuss the following topics.

[2.1: What is Rhetoric?](#)

[2.2: The Rhetorical Situation](#)

[2.3: The Rhetorical Appeals](#)

[2.4: Questions for reflection](#)

[2.5: Rhetorical Analysis](#)

[2.5.1: Reflect on your process](#)

2.1: What is Rhetoric?

The origin of rhetoric.

The ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, originated the definition of the word rhetoric that we still use today. In *The Art of Rhetoric*, he called rhetoric “the art of persuasion.” Before Aristotle wrote his book, the Greeks practiced rhetoric in the forum where they debated important topics of the day. The concepts were there, so Aristotle took those ideas and developed a system to organize and teach what they were doing.

There are three volumes in *The Art of Rhetoric*. They discuss different kinds of speeches (vol. 1); the characteristics of persuasion (vol. 2); and language and style elements (vol. 3). Western culture has used Aristotle's guidelines throughout its history and development. Our system of education, writing, and speaking, all come from Aristotle.

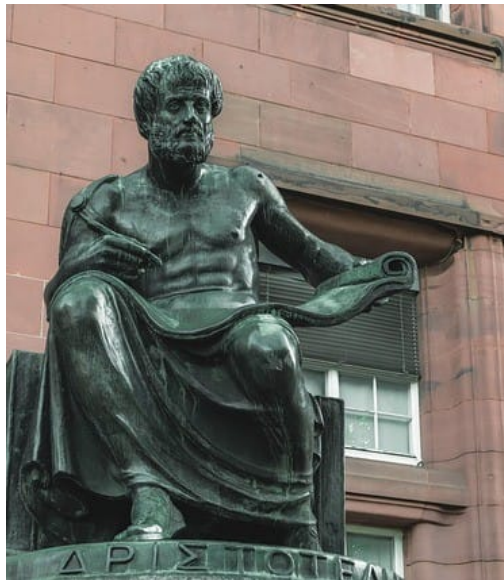


Figure 1: Image by [Couleur](#) from [Pixabay](#) Bronze sculpture of Aristotle seated with pen and scroll.

What is rhetoric?

These days, we define [rhetoric](#) as the ability to use language or images to communicate a message. If you remember, we said that most messages are arguments. Since the ability to persuade is needed to communicate these arguments, our new definition fits the parameters of the old one.

You will find rhetoric everywhere, from the ads you see to the information you are reading at this moment. Art, music, books, speeches, news media are all examples of places where you will find rhetoric. Even a username you choose for a game can be rhetoric as it communicates something about you. You are constantly encountering or producing persuasive arguments of varying degrees.

For example, you use rhetoric to convince friends to go out for coffee. You also use it to write a paper for a class, write an email to your boss, or post on social media. Even the menu outside a cafe tries to persuade you to come in and enjoy their food. Every time language is used to communicate, it is rhetoric.

Sometimes people have negative connotations with the word rhetoric. This is because people can use it to manipulate or harm

others. The word [propaganda](#) is a more accurate way to describe these instances. When people use rhetoric to mislead, lie, or swindle, that is propaganda. So, if you hear someone talking about empty or negative rhetoric, just know that this is not the only way to use it. Rhetoric can also be helpful, informative, creative, and beautiful. Think of the textbooks you read, news stories you hear, TikTok videos you watch, or songs you sing. All of these can use rhetoric in different and positive ways.

Exercise 1

Find examples of rhetoric in your neighborhood. What methods are used to persuade readers or listeners? Look at the words, images, symbols, and styles are used. How do they work together to persuade their reader?

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Figure 1: Bronze statue of Aristotle with pen and scroll. Image [Couleur](#) from [Pixabay](#)

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2.2: The Rhetorical Situation

Not only did Aristotle define rhetoric, he also explained how it works when it is used. He called it the rhetorical situation.

A **rhetorical situation** happens every time you use language to communicate. This could be speaking, writing, using signs, symbols, or images. When you're asked a question in class, you get a text from your friend, send a gif, or get a writing assignment, you are in a rhetorical situation.

The rhetorical situation has five elements that are depicted in the rhetorical triangle depicted in figure 1 and described throughout the rest of the chapter.

Aristotle described the **elements of rhetoric** that we use in a rhetorical situation. At that time, public communication was primarily spoken, so the elements he identified are speaker, audience, message, occasion, and context. Because this book focuses on writing, we will use writer and reader in place of speaker and audience. Regardless of the label, the elements work together in the same way.

To depict this process, Aristotle designed the rhetorical triangle. It attempts to illustrate how communication works in a rhetorical situation.

The writer (left corner) has a message (top corner) that they want to communicate to their reader (right corner). The inside of the triangle represents the occasion for the message. The space around depicts the context of the message.

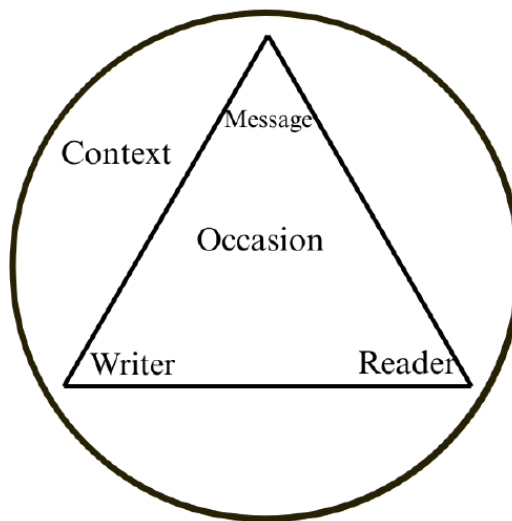


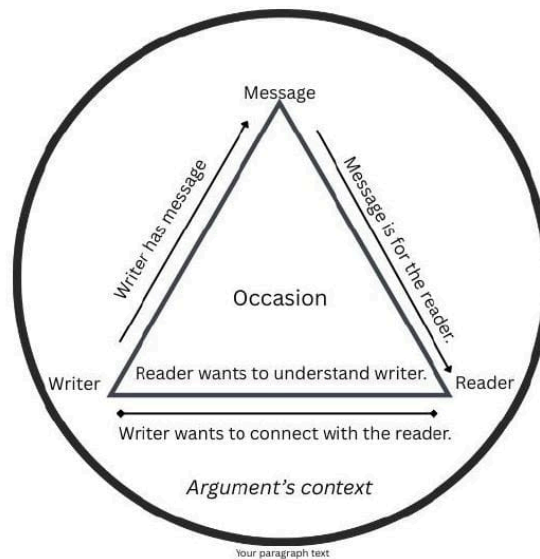
Figure 2.2.1: Black and white triangle with rhetorical situation elements by LauraLee Miller with Canva.

The elements of the rhetorical situation interact with each other in several ways as described and depicted below (figure 2).

First, the **writer** considers the rhetorical situation. The **occasion** within the triangle, starts the process. It is the purpose the writer shares their **message** (represented by the arrow from writer to message).

At the same time, writers consider their readers' needs. They choose writing techniques that will best engage and persuade their readers (shown by arrow from writer to reader).

As the **readers** consider the message, they try to understand it. They want the writer to be clear, organized, and interesting (shown by arrow pointing back to the writer).



The rhetorical triangle depicts the relationship among the reader, writer, and message.
Designed by LauraLee Miller with Canva.

The **message** is what writers want to communicate. It should be something significant and unique to the conversation* surrounding that topic. So, writers need to examine the topic, its conversation, and their own perspective. Even though writers share their point of view, they need to keep their readers in mind. The message needs thorough development with concrete details and evidence. It should contain enough for readers to understand the . After all, readers can only read your words, not your mind.

The writer should also include applicable **context**, (which surrounds the triangle). This is to help readers understand information that is relevant to the message. This might be background, history, development, or opposition. The writer makes intentional choices about the context they share. It should be relevant to the message and not random facts about the topic. The context lays the foundation for the argument.

Here are some examples of rhetorical situations that you may encounter:

Example 2.2.1

Photo 1. The speakers are the bride and groom. The audience are the witnesses and attendees at the wedding. The message is one of love and commitment, and the purpose is to joining two people in marriage. The context is



the development of this relationship.

Photo 1 by [Marius Muresan](#) on [Unsplash](#). Groom and bride look lovingly at each other.

Example 2.2.2



Photo 2. The speaker is the instructor. The students are the audience. The message is whatever the instructor is teaching, depicted on the screen. The purpose is to educate, and the context is this business.

Photo 2 by [Hkeely](#) Femal college professor in front of students.

Example 2.2.3

Photo 3. The speaker is the doctor. The patient is the audience. The test results are the message. The



purpose is to inform, and the context is the doctor's office.

Photo 3

by [National Cancer Institute](#) on [Unsplash](#) . Female doctor in white coat talks to a patient.

Nothing is written in a vacuum. No matter what you write about, there are others who have their own perspective and ideas. This brings us back to you, the writer trying to communicate your own point of view. When this happens, you should keep the rhetorical situation in mind, thinking about your reader, purpose, and the context you need to explain. It will help you make the writing choices you need to be an effective communicator.

Exercise 1

Rhetorical situation activity. Find three different kinds of images from the internet or around your school. Analyze the rhetorical situation of each image. Examine the author, message, audience, purpose, and context of the image. Contrast each part of the rhetorical situation among the images. What would happen if the audience and purpose of an image changed?

*Definition: Conversation

When we say "conversation" we mean what people are saying about your topic. This includes similar perspectives to yours and all opposing or adjacent ideas. It also includes the development of the topic and any related terms. For example, if your topic is social media use by children, the conversation would include positives and negatives about children using social media. It would also include the development, purpose, and dangerous uses of it. Whatever people are saying in relation to children using social media would be part of the current conversation. When you explain the context of your topic, you include the parts of the conversation relevant to your particular perspective.

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Photo 2 by Harrison Keely at [wikimedia creative commons](#). Femal college professor in front of students.

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2.3: The Rhetorical Appeals

In the last section, you learned that when you are given a writing assignment, you should consider your reader and the occasion before you start writing.

Then, when you begin writing, you make intentional choices that help you communicate clearly and effectively. Some of these choices include techniques that make your argument persuasive. A very effective choice is to use the [rhetorical appeals](#).

Aristotle described the rhetorical appeals in "Book Two" of *Rhetoric*. He identified described these appeals, ethos, pathos, and logos, as tools communicators use to persuade. They are not only only tools, but they are powerful ones.

As a student developing writing skills, you will be asked to both identify and use the rhetorical appeals. The appeals are directly related to the writer (ethos), the reader (pathos), and the argument (logos). To include rhetorical appeals, a writer might ask, how can I present myself so I seem credible and trustworthy to my reader? How can I be sure the readers connect with me and my argument? And, how can I ensure my argument is sound and effective?

Definitions.

Definition: The rhetorical appeals

Ethos comes from the Greek word for character. This refers to the writer, not the message. The writer demonstrates ethos by presenting themselves as authoritative, trustworthy, and credible.

Pathos comes from the Greek word for suffering, experience, or passion. It is related to feelings of sympathy and empathy. Used well, pathos persuades by creating ties between the reader and writer.

Logos comes from the Greek word for logic. It persuades by convincing readers that the message is sound and the evidence is reliable.

Explanation of how each rhetorical appeal works.

Ethos:

- Aristotle contends that writers must establish credibility in the minds of the audience.
- Writers should show unbiased expertise in the subject matter.
- You don't "use" ethos. Instead, you appeal to ethos in the way you represent yourself and your argument to the reader. You appeal to ethos when you share your credentials, present sound evidence, include other perspectives, and write well.
- If you have to analyze ethos in a text, you talk about what the author says and does to show they are credible, trustworthy, or ethical. Think about how they present themselves, how they speak about other authors or perspectives, and how they use language to reveal who they are.

Ethos. Example 2.3.1

If a politician, let's call them Pat, writes a speech and blames an opponent for all the ills in the country, they are showing a lack of character. This approach will probably only work for those who are already in agreement with Pat. The rest of the audience will see Pat as someone who shows little regard for others or their reputations. Using these kinds of rhetorical

choices, Pat establishes themselves as a person of little integrity or credibility. By continuing to badmouth others, the politician will develop a bad reputation. People will not want to work with Pat because they will not want to be part of that kind of campaign or risk being maligned by someone they work with.

2. Pathos

- When readers have positive thoughts or emotions, they will be more likely to accept the legitimacy of an argument.
- An appeal to pathos is how readers respond to the language, images, and ideas presented in the text. An appeal to pathos is how these things are described to have an emotional effect on readers.
- Appealing to pathos can also help readers relate to the writer or their message. Readers may have positive feelings if a writer seems nice or funny. They may feel sympathy for the writer who describes a bad situation they are in. They have warm feelings when reading descriptions of family or nostalgia.
- A writer does not "use" pathos. Rather, writers use words with connotations, descriptions, examples, personal experience to affect the readers' emotions.
- Sometimes writers will purposely evoke strong emotions to manipulate readers. When this happens, it is called propaganda. People who use propaganda might try to persuade by eliciting feelings of fear, love, patriotism, guilt, humor, hate, or joy. Sometimes appeals to pathos are very touching, such as some coffee commercials or animal shelter ads, appeal to nostalgia, family, or sympathy. These are overly sentimental and can guilt people into buying something or donating to a cause.
- Appeals to pathos is not bad, as some may suggest. In fact, using the right techniques helps your reader connect with you and your message. Instead of trying to generate strong emotion, you get readers to relate to you on a human level by sharing similar experiences. You might use an anecdotes, examples, or lessons from your own life to create a bond between you both. Readers are more likely to be persuaded when they share something in common with the writer.

Pathos. Example 2.3.2

Politician Pat realizes that their reputation is shot and their ethos is poor, so they decide to use a different tactic. This time Pat will say positive things-- not about the opponent, but about the country. Pat writes an Op-Ed for the local paper. In it, they quote the country's founding document and use inspiring words written by judicious people. Pat also includes imagery of family and memories from "the good old days." Pat wants these things to make readers nostalgic, so they will associate Pat with all of those nice feelings. Once those feelings are established, Pat has a better chance of persuading opponents.

3. Logos

Logos refers to any attempt to appeal to the intellect or reason.

You do not "use" logos. Rather, you use facts, statistics, polls, and studies to convince readers that the claims in the message are correct. That is how you persuade by appealing to logos.

To analyze appeals to logos, you can point out anything rational, objective, of good judgement, or reasonable. You can also point out logical fallacies, irrational claims, unreasonable facts, or anything that seems suspicious.

Readers who find flaws in logic, fallacies, unreliable evidence, or inaccurate claims are unlikely to trust the writer or their argument.

Logos. Example 2.3.3

Pat's campaign has improved since the Op-Ed, but the opponent is still ahead in the polls. Pat decides it is time to another speech, but this speech is to the local union. In the speech, Pat says the unions cost the workers more than they get in return. Pat wants to convince workers to quit the union in order to outlaw collective bargaining when elected. Pat provides accounting evidence that shows how union leaders mishandle the dues paid by the workers. Pat also has statistics that show workers could earn more without collective bargaining. The use of this hard evidence works, and Pat has the workers riled up and ready to quit. Suddenly, Flash Fact-checker bursts through the door and announces that Pat's accounting books and

statistics are fakes! Despite protests from Pat, it doesn't take long for Flash to convince the workers that all of Pat's evidence is worthless. Quickly the workers realize Pat has lied, and they walk out. If Pat had used accurate and credible evidence, he might have had the union workers votes.

The Rhetorical Appeals		
Ethos	Pathos	Logos
		
Authority Credibility Expertise Knowledgeable Ethical	Emotions Relationships Descriptions Anecdotes Word choice	Reasoning Data Studies Surveys Primary sources

The chart lists attributes for each the rhetorical appeal.

Chart created by LauraLee Miller using Canva. Chart depicts the elements of ethos, pathos, and logos.

Exercise \(\PageIndex{1}\)

Search for five different print ads. Identify how they use the rhetorical appeals. You might not find all three in every ad. Identify, also, the five elements of a rhetorical situation. How do the rhetorical appeals work with the rhetorical situation to communicate a message?

Putting it together.

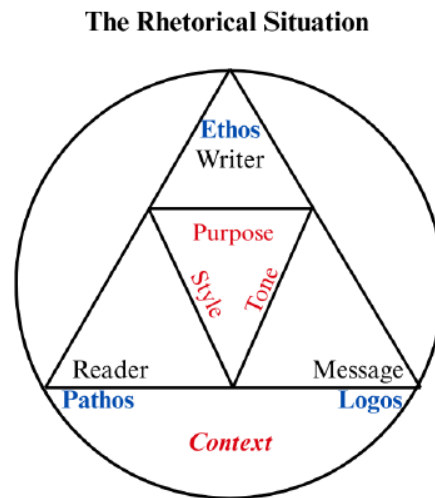


Figure 2.3.2: Designed by LauraLee Miller with Canva.

Rhetorical Triangle that shows the relationships with writer, reader, and message to the rhetorical appeals. Explained in text below.

The rhetorical triangle diagram above shows how all the pieces of communication works together. **Writers** (top corner) appeal to **ethos** (top) by proving they are credible, authoritative, or trustworthy.

Readers (left corner) are persuaded with appeals to **pathos** (left) by using detail, description, or literary techniques.

When writers appeal to **logos** (right corner), they use logic and evidence to make the **message** (right) sound and credible.

Within the triangle another upside down triangle shows further persuasive methods such as tone, style, and keeping to your purpose.

Surrounding the triangles, the context provides readers the background needed to understand the argument.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before you write:

Writing for your purpose. What are you asked to do in the assignment? What verb is specified in the instructions? Inform? Argue? Analyze? What are the conventions used for that genre?

Writing for your reader. Who is your reader? What education level are they? Where are they from? What are their beliefs? What cultural or conventional elements might you need to consider?

Including context. What do your readers know about your subject? Do they know the current conversation surrounding your topic? What do they need to know to understand your argument? What background, history, or definitions need to be explained?

Writing your message for your audience and purpose. Does your message fulfill your purpose? Is your thesis statement and organization appropriate for your purpose and genre? Is your message appropriate for your reader? What do you want your reader to know after reading your essay? Have you demonstrated the importance of what you are saying? Does everything you have said relate to your thesis?

As a writer, have I shown I'm trustworthy and reliable? Have I made connections with and for my reader? Have I provided sound logic and credible evidence? Have I used the appropriate writing style, academic conventions, and citation guidelines? Is there anything else I can do to make my message clearer?

Exercise 2.3.2

Write a hypothetical email to your friend explaining how you made a mistake at your bank job, and it cost the bank \$5000. Next, think about writing that email to the bank supervisor. What changes in the rhetorical situation? How do the audience and purpose change? Now imagine writing that email to a customer whose money you lost. How does that change the rhetorical situation and your message.

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2.4: Questions for reflection

Rhetoric reflection questions

1. How would you define rhetoric?
2. How has your understanding of rhetoric changed? How does knowing more about it change how you look at texts?
3. Why is thinking about your audience and purpose a good way to start a writing project?
4. Name three ways that writers can appeal to ethos, to pathos, and to logos. (Three for each one.)
5. Explain how each element of the rhetorical triangle relate to each other.
6. How can understanding rhetoric, the rhetorical situation, and the rhetorical appeals empower you to be a better communicator?
7. When do you think rhetoric crosses the line and becomes propaganda?

2.5: Rhetorical Analysis

Introduction to rhetorical analysis.

A rhetorical analysis looks closely at the methods of persuasion a writer uses in an argument. Instead of asking what the argument is, it asks how it is argued. Often the analysis focuses on specific criteria such as style choices or the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos.

In other words, a [rhetorical analysis](#) looks closely at persuasive language and techniques. You, as the analysis writer, interpret how the author creates their argument. You identify the type of rhetoric the author uses. Then, you use that as a lens to examine all the parts of the text such as the thesis, examples, and evidence. As you look closely, ask questions like "what rhetorical choices are made," "how do they use rhetoric" or "why do they make this choice?"

Be careful, though. When writing an analysis, it is easy to start summarizing rather than analyzing. That is not a rhetorical analysis. That is summary. Summary asks what is being said while analysis asks how

Ask questions like:

- What kind of rhetoric am I identifying?
- How does the writer present ideas?
- What genre and tone are evident?
- How is the argument organized?
- How effective are the persuasive techniques?
- Is the argument persuasive?
- Do the rhetorical techniques enhance the argument?

Most of the words and ideas presented in your essay should be yours. You will only use quotations from the author as evidence to back up what you are saying. If you have a lot of quotations or find that you are reiterating the text, you need to check that you are still analyzing.

Assume your reader is familiar with the content of the text. Summarizing relevant parts of the text in your introduction, however, is a good way to add contextual information. Choose the key ideas that directly relate to your thesis. This will help your reader understand what you think is important right away.

Writing a rhetorical analysis.

When you write a rhetorical analysis, you will use the writing process. If you are not familiar with it, chapter 6, "[The Writing Process](#)" will be helpful.

Steps to write the rhetorical analysis.

1. Understand the assignment, the audience, and purpose. Know what rhetorical strategies you will be use as criteria for your analysis. Often it is the rhetorical appeals, but it may be methods.
2. Critically read the text to be that you are analyzing. Annotate and take notes.
3. Summarize the text. Note the argument and what the author is saying.
4. Look for examples of the rhetorical appeals used within the text. Refer back to the previous section on the [rhetorical appeals](#).

5. Evaluate how and how well the author uses the rhetorical appeals. Was the argument effective, interesting, creative, efficient, or none of these? Part of the argument may be effective but not other parts. For example, the appeal to pathos may be effective, but the article failed to show the author's credibility.

6. Write a working thesis statement. This is just a starting idea that evolves as you work.

7. Organize your ideas using an outline or other [organization](#) methods as described in chapter 6.

8. Write a rough draft with a final thesis statement.

9. Get some feedback.

10. Revise

Repeat 9 and 10 as often as needed.

11. Proofread and edit.

Writing analysis rhetorical thesis statements.

To write your thesis statement, you need to make a claim on the author's use of rhetoric and their ability to persuade. A thesis will state a writer's opinion (the [claim](#)) and the reasons why ([evidence](#)). *For a more thorough explanation, see the discussion on argumentative thesis statements in chapter 5.*

A rhetorical thesis statement template you could follow is:

In "(Title)," Author adverb* appeals to (ethos, pathos, or logos) to argue that author's argument.

*Adverbs describe how. Often they end in -ly, but do not have to. Some possible adverbs are effectively, successfully, convincingly, strategically, humorously, delightfully, carefully, skillfully, etc. You could also use the antonyms of these.

Example 2.5.1 rhetorical analysis thesis statement.

These are example thesis statements a student might use in their rhetorical analysis.

Example 1. In "The Importance of Local Elections," Helen Armstrong's lackadaisical appeals to ethos and logos fail to convince readers to participate in local elections.

The **claim** is Armstrong's attempt to appeal to ethos and logos lacked spirit or interest.

The **evidence** includes explanation and examples of how Armstrong makes those attempts. Each body paragraph will address one way Armstrong fails to persuade with ethos or logos.

An example topic sentence might say: "The argument failed to include enough evidence to encourage community members to get involved in local politics."

Example 2.5.2 More rhetorical analysis thesis statements.

Example 2. Ben Crumblebiscuit tries to argue that the "Sherlock" series is better than the "Sherlock Holmes" movies but fails because he depends too much on readers' sympathy for the series' character of Holmes.

Example 3. With her dynamic use of imagery and humor, LauraLee Miller, delightfully argues in “Any Other Choice is ‘Inconceivable’” that “The Princess Bride” is the best movie of all time.

Notice how these thesis statements make a judgement of the persuasive techniques and why that judgement is made.

You want to make the same sort of moves. Remember, you are making your own argument as you analyze the rhetoric used in another's argument. Your claim needs to be arguable. That means someone could disagree with your thesis. It should be more than that the author appeals to ethos, pathos, or logos. That is not very disputable. You want to include an assessment of those rhetorical methods in your claim.

Your entire thesis statement reflects your opinion on how well the author persuades their readers and why. Since you are one reader, it may be useful to ask yourself if you were convinced by the author's persuasive techniques. You will not talk about yourself in your essay, but you can use that as the perspective of readers in general. This might help you figure out why you feel the author's techniques were or were not successful.

Example 2.5.3 Rhetorical analysis essay

You can find an example rhetorical analysis here: [Rhetorical Analysis Example](#).

Notice that the important elements are labeled. Use this paper as a model and check that you have all the labeled parts in your own paper.

Whenever you write or analyze an argument, you should consider the rhetoric used. Being intentional in your choice of rhetorical appeals strengthens your arguments. It will also help you connect to your reader, making you more persuasive.

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2.5.1: Reflect on your process

Reflection

Once you finish your rhetorical analysis, it is always a good idea to reflect on your writing process. You can use these questions to help.

1. What did I enjoy in writing this assignment?
2. What did I find least enjoyable?
3. What was my writing process like?
4. What would I do differently next time?
5. Am I happy with the result?

3: INFORMATION LITERACY

Chapter Introduction

People used to say, “believe none of what you hear, and half of what you see.” These days, however, it should be – verify all you see, hear, or read.

Information is a crucial part of our society. With the advancement of technology, we have access to a tremendous amount of information daily. This has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include connecting with family; learning new information; and keeping up-to-date on news. We no longer rely on tv news for information as people on social media around the world post events as they happen. The disadvantages are misinformation, disinformation, and plain lies.

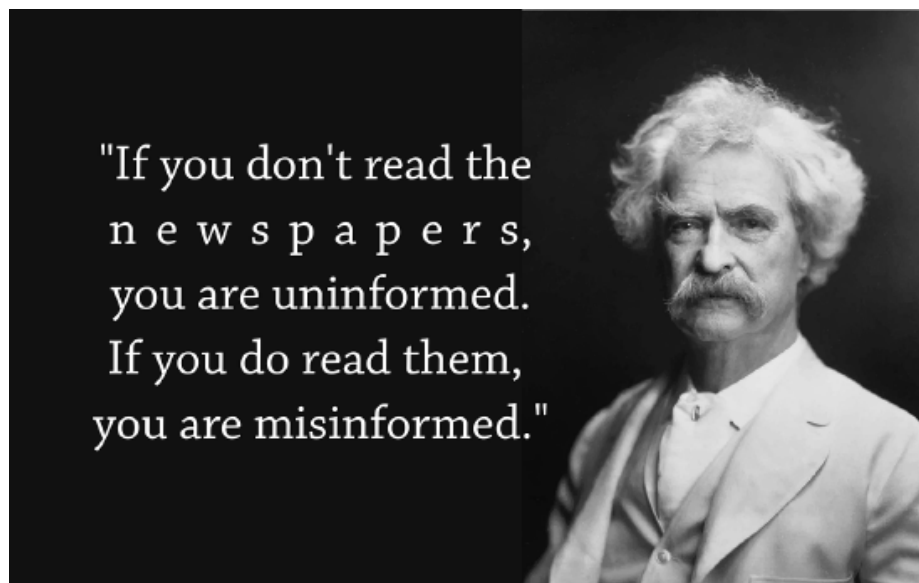


Figure 3.1: Image by [Gordon Johnson](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Photo of Mark Twain with quote saying, "If you don't read the newspapers, you are uninformed. If you do read them, you are misinformed."

Mark Twain's use of irony in this quotation is still relevant today. If he were alive today, he might change newspapers to social media or news channels, but the sentiment would be the same. Misinformation abounds in all kinds of news sources. It can be difficult balancing getting enough information to stay informed and knowing when it becomes too much.

The development of 24 hour news has led many to mistake entertainment for journalism. Social media has also contributed to the spread of false information and “fake news.” Meanwhile, conspiracy theories and rumors spread quickly across platforms. Anyone can create a real looking website, hiding malice or disinformation. And now, as AI contributes to false images and stories, deep fakes get more accurate. This leads many to wonder if we can trust anything we see or read. And now that social media is no longer fact checking, we can only rely on ourselves to determine what we read is real. That is why we start the chapter by defining and discussing misinformation, disinformation, and fake news.

As a student, you will use information in multiple ways. One key way is by writing researched papers. In order to effectively use research to support your ideas, you need credible evidence. You will also need

to determine which of the sources you find are accurate and trustworthy. In this chapter, you will be shown different methods for obtaining and evaluating information.

Chapter goals

By the end of this chapter, you should:

1. Review misinformation and fake news.
2. Understand how misinformation is spread..
3. Articulate why information literacy is vital.
4. Have an increased understanding of information literacy.
5. Be able to name a few types of information literacy.
6. List the 7 skills of information literacy.

[3.1: Misinformation, disinformation, and fakes](#)

[3.2: Literacy Landscape](#)

[3.3: The Seven Pillars of Information Literacy](#)

[3.4: Questions for reflection](#)

3.1: Misinformation, disinformation, and fakes

Misinformation

Misinformation is the general term for false information whether intentional or not. There are several subcategories of misinformation, including disinformation, fake news, and deep fakes.

Misinformation is spread in several ways. People mistake it for real information and pass it along to their friends or family. Often people share it on social media, usually with good intentions. They see or hear something they think everyone should know, so they share it without checking its credibility. It can also be produced or shared with the intention of misleading or manipulating.

There are a few ways misinformation can be spread.

- One way misinformation is spread is deliberately creating false information and posting it to spread lies or create division.
- Another way misinformation is spread is “stolen satire.” This is when someone tweaks a satirical or humorous story into a serious one that seems real. For example, sharing an “Onion” story as real news.
- Misinformation could be “imposter content” where someone pretends to be a famous person or use a product to spread false ideas.
- Then there is “manipulated content” where some text or an image has been changed with imaging software or AI. The technology used for all of these kinds of misinformation is getting more sophisticated, making it difficult to tell when it is false.

Disinformation is the intentional dissemination of false information. This might be politically biased, purposely misleading, propaganda, or information that has been changed to contain the opposite meaning of the original. Disinformation also includes things like fake websites, conspiracy theories, pseudoscience, and biased misinterpretation of facts. There is also propaganda, clickbait, and companies that seem to be providing information when they are really selling something.

Disinformation can be very deceptive. Even fact checkers have a difficult time determining fact from false information sometimes.

Fake news

Fake news is completely wrong “news” created to mislead people. This kind of news can be sensational, contentious, or emotionally charged to get people agitated. It is often spread on social media and used to divide people into sides. We heard a lot about fake news in the 2016 election.

Deep fakes are relatively new development. They are digitally enhanced media and becoming increasingly difficult to identify. They can occur in the forms of images, videos, and audio media. Faked images can be harmful, even destructive. Innocent people may have their face put into a photo causing them to look bad. These types of images can cause many problems and ruin reputations. Being able to discern whether an image or sound is real can take a lot of practice and know-how.

During the COVID outbreak, there was not only a pandemic, but an **infodemic** as well. This term was coined by David Rothkopf of the *Washington Post* during the early 2000’s SARS outbreak. An **infodemic** occurs when information spreads so fast and far that it is difficult to know the truth. During COVID there was a medical infodemic about how disease is spread, vaccinations, masks, and the seriousness of COVID. It caused mistrust of health professionals, undermined the national health response, and sometimes led to foolish behaviors that caused more intense illness or even death.

Fake news can be extremely difficult to recognize, especially on social media. A study at the Stanford Graduate School of Education found that middle and high school students had surprisingly low abilities

to recognize fake news. They lacked the “**news literacy**” to distinguish social media ads from legitimate news stories. After reading an article on financial planning, they were unable to correctly determine that the information was not accurate. They didn’t know where to look or what to look for to tell the difference. (The article is linked below in the Note- Added resources.)

When you need to include research for a school assignment, you will need to find sources you can trust. As a scholar, you want to show good ethos by doing your best to use accurate sources. So, you will need to know how to determine whether a source is credible and how to find the best information possible. Without being able to determine whether information is appropriate for your use, you might report fake news, use other misinformation, or base an argument on the wrong conclusions.

Note- Added resource:

Link to article: “[Stanford Researchers Find Students Have Trouble Judging Credibility Information Online](#)”

Information literacy is from The News Literacy Project Fact sheet linked here: [Misinformation fact sheet](#)

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3.2: Literacy Landscape

What is information literacy?

In college, you are expected to find and use information in the form of research. Having information literacy helps you do that.

Literacy, in its simplest form, is the ability to read and write. At a more advanced level, it is being competent in a specialized language.

Information literacy is being able to understand and use information. As a student, you need to know how to find it, analyze it, and use it to support your arguments.

There are other ways besides conducting research to be information literate. You also consume social media, shop, watch shows, find reviews, and communicate. All of them require information literacy. If you have a job, you've probably noticed that you need a specialized type of knowledge. That's another kind of information literacy.

What you learn and practice in your research applies everywhere. The information skills you learn in school will go with you to other classes, careers, and life in general. We call the different types of information literacy that you encounter in school the **literacy landscape**. They are depicted and explained below.

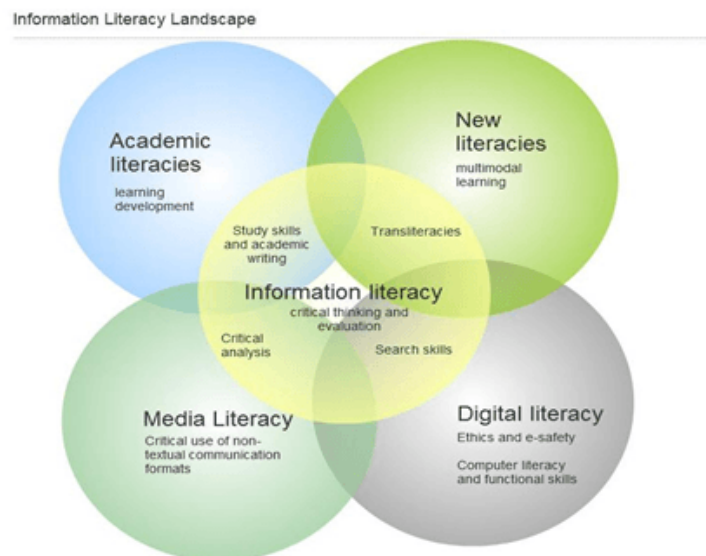


Figure 3.2.1: [Literacy Landscape](#) is shared from Madison College libraries, Madison, WI.

This diagram of the literacy landscape is explained below.

Notice how the circle for **information literacy** is in the middle. It overlaps with all the other types of Literacies. It includes critical thinking and evaluation because those are skills crucial in finding and using credible information.

Academic literacy, which you use often, includes ways you learn and improve reading and writing skills. It intersects information literacy in areas of study skills and academic writing/research.

New Literacy includes the new ways you use information to learn. This might look like moving from pen and paper to a laptop

or using new technology in school. It overlaps information literacy with information literacy in how they involve many media and technologies as it develops.

Media literacy is how we communicate without writing or speaking. Examples of this are graphics, images, visuals, sound, movement, or body language. It intersects information literacy in critical analysis, which implies that we analyze by looking and listening to more than words to understand messages at a deeper level.

You are probably familiar with **digital literacy**, though you may not call it that. This is your knowledge on technology, computers, searching online, using different apps and communication media. It overlaps with information literacy in that you need to know digital skills to conduct research.

Overall, you can see how you might use one, two, or all of these Literacies when writing a research project. The more you understand and use these Literacies, the more adept at them you will become.

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3.3: The Seven Pillars of Information Literacy

While the literacy landscape describes knowledge that you learn, to be able to use that knowledge is a different set of skills. Simply put, these are the steps you need to conduct your research. There are several ways to depict how we do this. We are going to use the [Seven Pillars of Information Literacy](#) linked here from [Western Technical College Library Guide](#).

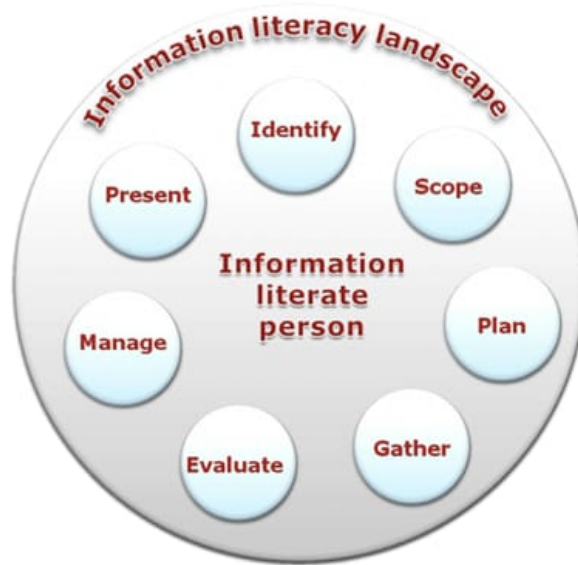


Figure 3.3.1: [The Seven Pillars of Information Literacy](#) is shared from Western Technical College libraries, La Crosse, WI.

The seven pillars of literacy landscape depict 7 pillars, each of them a step in completing the research process, explained further below.

These are the steps an information literate person completes in the research process.

1. **Identify** when you need information.
This will be the occasion, purpose, and rhetorical situation. You will determine what you need to do and how you will do it.
2. **Scope** out what information you have, need, and where to find it.
These are the beginning stages of finding information. You will note what you already know to understand what you need to learn. You also need to decide where you will look for your information.
3. **Plan** strategies to locate needed information from various media.
You will take a little time to organize your research and make a plan of attack. This will help you stay focused and make the process easier.
4. **Gather** information by knowing where to locate and how to access needed information.
Now you will start looking for information in the places you scoped out in step 2.
5. **Evaluate** information for accuracy and usability.
You use strategies to help determine whether a source is credible and useable.
6. **Manage** information within written texts honestly and appropriately.
You use recognized formatting and guidelines as directed by your instructor.
7. **Present** gathered information by summarizing, synthesizing, and creating texts to share.
You will draft your argument, add your sources, write the final draft, and submit it.

In the next chapter on research, we will integrate these steps into the research process so you can see how they work together. You will notice that these steps flow right into the research process. You may recognize that you have already done a lot of these skills in other research projects.

Knowing all seven skills will make researching easier, more efficient, and more effective. We will discuss

these further in the next chapter on research.

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3.4: Questions for reflection

Information literacy reflection questions

1. How do misinformation, disinformation, and fake news differ from each other? In what ways are they alike?
2. If you were to encourage friends to do a better job avoiding fake news, what would you say to them?
3. How would define information literacy?
4. What are the advantages or disadvantages of technological advances occurring today?
5. Looking at the "information literacy landscape" Venn diagram. How you would describe the relationships among the kinds of literacy?

4: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Introduction

Some students get anxious when it comes time to do research. This is understandable as the whole process can seem daunting. Supporting an argument with research can seem intimidating and time consuming. This is especially true if you wait until the last minute to write your paper.

However, if you start early, ask questions, and use the writing process, your anxiety levels will decrease. The [writing process](#) is a series of tasks that you use to complete a writing project. Keep in mind that a research paper isn't that different from a non-researched one. You use similar organization and paragraph structures. You just substitute researched information for examples or personal experience. The information you include will be used as evidence to support your ideas. It'll be incorporated as summaries, paraphrases, and quotations. To avoid plagiarizing that information, you will cite your sources using established formatting guidelines. All of this will be explained in the coming chapter.

Chapter goals.

By the end of the chapter, you should:

1. See how the skills in the literacy landscape apply to the research process.
2. Plan a research project.
3. Review strategies for narrowing a topic and writing a research question.
4. Learn the definitions of some research metalanguage.
5. Use a library database.
6. Apply the CRAAP test and lateral reading to evaluating online sources.
7. Write notes from sources as summaries, paraphrases, or quotations.
8. Differentiate an acceptable paraphrase from a plagiarized one.
9. Define and avoid dropped quotations.

When you get a research assignment, the best strategy is to look at your schedule and make a project plan. If you don't use a planner, you can download and the appropriate calendar pages or use an online calendar.

As you plan, consider the number of week you have for the project. The research process should include time for reading sources, taking notes, drafting, and revising. This will be in addition to your classroom time, coursework, any holidays, your work schedule, weekend activities. Give yourself plenty of time for proofreading and editing. Remember to include time to eat and sleep. Note any due dates within the writing process plus the final due date.

4.1: Research Using the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy

[4.1.1: Identify](#)

[4.1.2: Scope](#)

[4.1.3: Plan](#)

[4.1.4: Gather](#)

[4.1.5: Evaluate](#)

4.1.6: Manage

4.1.7: Present

4.2: Questions for reflection

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4.1: Research Using the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy

Overview of the Research Process

Writing a researched paper, like every writing endeavor, uses the [writing process](#) (see chapter 6).

These are the steps you should follow as you work on your research project.

1. Read and understand the assignment. This is when you start to **identify when you need information***.
2. Determine your audience and purpose. Choose your tone and style.
3. Do some preliminary research. This is when you **scope out the needed information**.
4. Narrow your topic.
5. Write a research question. This is where you will **plan your strategies**.
6. Collect sources in a working bibliography. This is when you **gather and evaluate your sources**.
7. Organize ideas and write a working thesis.
8. Write the first draft of your paper. This is when you **manage your sources**.
9. Find additional research.
10. Revise and edit.
11. Submit final draft. This is the last step -- **present gather information**.

*Items in bold denote the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy discussed in chapter 3.3.

As we discuss each part of the research process in this chapter, we will incorporate the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy. This is so you can see how they work together. The Seven Pillars are the primary part of the academic research process, and each pillar describes what to do as you conduct your research.

4.1.1: Identify

You have gotten your research assignment, so now what? Before you put the assignment away to do later, look at the next few pages. Hopefully, you will see that writing a research paper is not only doable but also enjoyable.

We are starting at the beginning of the research process and the first of the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy- Identify.

You use this skill when you're preparing to write your research assignment. Just like a non-researched paper, you need to understand what your instructor wants and to think about your rhetorical situation.

1. Read and understand the assignment. Note the deadlines and requirements. Make sure you understand what genre you are using as that determines your organization. Ask questions. Do not assume you know.
2. Determine your audience and purpose. They determine other choices you make such as tone and style. Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write.
3. Find your topic. If you are assigned a topic, try to find an aspect that interests you. If you have some choice in topic, choose something that intrigues you but you know little about. You will have more interest in the topic, so you will be more motivated to learn more. Plus, you will get to expand your knowledge and strengthen your critical thinking skills.

4.1.2: Scope

Scope out what information you have, need, and where to find it.

The next step is to find a focus for your paper.

Jot down what you already know about your topic. This helps you discover what you don't know and what you need to find out. It will also come in handy when documenting sources. You will know if you got specific information from a source or if you already knew it.

Do some preliminary research on your topic. To get broad information or context, use an encyclopedia such as Encyclopedia Britannica or a site such as Credo Reference. Books or textbooks are also a good way to find background information. Use the *index* to find specific topics so you don't have to read the entire book.

Narrow your topic. Often students think they need to keep their topics broad so they have plenty to talk about. If you do this, you may find that you get overwhelmed by the amount of information you will need for your paper. Keeping your topic narrow helps you control the amount of information you need and determine which information is relevant. Instead of a broad overview of your topic, you will delve it, which is much more interesting and insightful.

How to narrow your topic: Consider the conversations surrounding your topic.

Look at some news sources to find out what people saying about it. What are the different perspectives? Which points seem the most debated, important, or relatable? Ask some general questions such as who, what, when, where, why, and how.

Narrow your topic. If you plan to write about climate change, you should not plan to research everything on climate change. That is too much information to handle and to put into one paper. You will need to choose a specific subtopic like water pollution.

BUT, that is not narrow enough. There are so many kinds of water pollution you won't know where to start. So, you need to find a subtopic of that.

Let's say you choose groundwater pollution. You still need to narrow that. What kind of groundwater? Where is the pollution? What type of pollution is it. Choose one of these questions to narrow your topic again.

If you decide to choose chemical pollution in groundwater, you will almost be there. You should choose one more subtopic that specifies what kind of chemical pollution you are going to address. If you decide to write about herbicide pollution in Midwestern groundwater, you have a good start. Now you are ready to create a research question.

A good way to narrow your topic like we did above, you can use a [brainstorming techniques](#) such as listing or mind-mapping. You can find more information in the Invention section in the chapter on the Writing Process.

Write a research question.

Having a good research question will help you stay focused and control the amount of research you need. As you proceed, you may find that you find another branch of your topic that is more interesting. That is fine and part of the writing process. Write a new research question, and continue. Just be careful that you are not changing your question often. If you keep finding different directions that you want to go, your topic is probably too broad. See if you can narrow it a bit further.

A good research question has the following qualities:

1. It is narrow and explores one idea from your topic.

Look closely at the examples of different kinds of research questions below.

Example 4.1.2.1

Too broad: Do standardized tests determine the education levels of a child? (There are too many unanswered questions that go along with this question. What tests? What age student? How is education level defined?) Better: Does the ACT exam adequately determine whether a student is academically ready for college?

Too descriptive: Discuss the ramifications of using standardized tests in an elementary classroom.

Better: How does using annual standardized tests affect teaching methods of middle school teachers?

2. It is arguable. You need to be able to choose a side and defend it.

Example 4.1.2.2

Not arguable: How many states rely on standardized test scores to determine teacher wages? (There is nothing to debate; the answer is factual.)

Better: Are standardized test scores a fair way to determine high school teacher wages?

3. It can be supported with researched information.

Example 4.1.2.3

Difficult to adequately support: Should college acceptance rely solely on standardized test scores? (The answer would probably be mostly opinion.)

Better: What are the most effective methods of determining a student's acceptance into college?

Once you have a specific research question, you are ready to move on to the next step. You will have clear direction and what kind of information you will need.

4.1.3: Plan

Plan your project.

Now it is time to sit down and figure out how you are going to complete this assignment. If you set up a roadmap for yourself, you will have enough time to do your research, organize your thoughts, draft your paper, and cite it. Doing this short step can give you more confidence and reduce the frustration of trying to write a paper in a few days or hours.

1. Get out your planner or a calendar, and write down all the due dates your instructor has given you. This will give you a scope of what and when you need to do in shorter increments. If your instructor has not given mid-paper due dates, schedule them for yourself. Use the overview in the chapter [introduction](#) to give you ideas. If you can, be consistent and generous with the chunks of time you schedule.
2. Mark the times you are not available to work on your paper. Include work, classes, activities, family time, recreation time, etc.
3. Next, block out chunks of time to work on your paper. Make sure you have given yourself enough time to meet each of the due dates you or your instructor set up. Doing this will keep your timeframes short and the work will be more manageable. If you can, be consistent and generous with the chunks of time you schedule.
4. If it helps, write down what you will do in each of those blocked off sections on your schedule.

You will find the little bit of time it takes to plan your work will quickly make up for itself. Planning your project like this is a good habit to continue. You will find it useful in your other classes and other areas of your life.

Discover metalanguage

Every discipline has its own vocabulary pertinent to that area. Conducting research is no different. As you work, you will encounter specialist terms that you need to know to research. Knowing research based metalanguage is helpful. [Metalanguage](#) is language about language, and different areas of study have their own language. For our purpose, we will identify words that will help you understand how to find and work with sources. For example, you'll need to know what a search engine is to find sources online. According to [Merriam Webster](#), a search engine is "computer software used to search data (such as text or a database) for specified information also: a site on the World Wide Web that uses such software." In other words, a website or software used to find information.

Understanding the specified language of research will make you a more efficient researcher. If you know what a subject heading is, for example, you know you can look there to help you narrow your topic or find other areas of that topic you might want to consider. Knowing what Boolean Operators can help you refine your search so you get more specific results.

Some of the words you should understand are:

1. [Keyword](#)
2. [Boolean Operators](#)
3. [Subject heading](#)
4. [Primary sources](#)
5. [Secondary source](#)
6. [Databases](#)
7. [Academic Journal](#)
8. [Scholarly Article](#)
9. [Peer reviewed](#)
10. [Abstract](#)
11. [Annotated bibliography](#)
12. [DOI](#)
13. [Permalink](#)
14. [Plagiarism](#)

15. [Search engines](#)
16. [Web directories](#)
17. [Media/multimedia](#)
18. [Web page/web site](#)

There are many more, but these are ones you'll run across most often. Keep this list nearby to reference when needed. If you run across a new word that you don't understand, add it to your list. You'll need to do a *keyword* search in your *search engine*.

Exercise 4.1.3.1

Use this webpage to write definitions to the words above. [Library and Research Vocabulary from Santa Fe College Library](#). You will also find more information with the definitions.

Works Cited

"Research Vocabulary." Research 101, Lawrence W Tyree Library LibGuides, Santa Fe College, Santa Fe, New Mexico,

<https://www.sfcollge.edu/library>, <https://sfcollege.libguides.com/research101/vocabulary/>

"Search engine." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/search%20engine>,

4.1.4: Gather

Start in the library.

Books and [encyclopedia](#):

Don't overlook books to gain a broad understanding of your topic. You can also use the index in the back to pinpoint specific topics relevant to your paper. Encyclopedia contains general information on a broad number of topics.

Databases:

Start with your school library. Your library's databases contain credible, expertly-written sources for your paper. Start with broad databases that cover many topics such as Academic Search Premier or Academic OneFile. Once you have a good understanding of your topic, you could look into the specialty databases for that discipline.

Sometimes students will say that “googling” a topic is a lot easier than trying to find sources in a database. It is true that there is a little more effort in finding sources there, but once you do, you will discover the advantages of databases over web searches. Databases include subject headings to find related topics, which is helpful when narrowing a topic. They often include similar articles, text to voice, and ways to download the article. It is easier to annotate and print database articles, too. Databases also include citation information that you can copy/paste into your paper. Most importantly, you do not have to spend time determining whether the source is trustworthy. So, it may take a little more work at first, but using databases are much more efficient, thus saving time in the long run.

Libguides:

Often instructors will ask librarians to put a collection of resources in a libguide. A [libguide](#) contains resources for your class or assignment. These might include specific databases, citation resources, researching techniques, or other resources. If you don't know if a libguide has been created for you, ask your instructor or librarian if one is available.

Conduct your own field research:

[Field research](#) refers to research that you conduct yourself. You can observe or ask questions to gather qualitative data. Qualitative data contains socially-based information. This is unlike quantitative data, which can be counted or measured then stated in numbers. Qualitative information includes interviews, surveys, and case studies while quantitative information includes experiments, calculations that can be quantified.

Because you will not have a lot of time to conduct intricate studies, you will want to focus on quicker methods of field research. You should be able to conduct interviews or short surveys provided you start early enough.

Interviews can be a good source to support other sources or introduce an idea. They can also be educational and enjoyable on a personal level when done with the right person.

1. Your instructors are a good place to start when looking for people to interview. You could also ask professionals you know or have connections with.
2. Be professional and courteous when asking for an interview.
3. When you ask for an interview, be transparent and explain what it is for and what kind of information you are looking for.
4. Ask if they prefer the interview to be in person or through email.
5. If you want a quote from the interview, ask first, and if they say “no,” abide by their wishes.

6. Have your questions prepared before the interview to avoid wasting time. Make them specific for the type of information you need.
7. Do not wait until the last minute to ask for an interview. Most professionals are busy, so it may be awhile before they answer an email or have time for an appointment.
8. Cite your interview within your paper and in the works cited page.

Surveys can be done fairly quickly with a small sample size. They won't be official, but you might be able to show trends from a small, regional group.

1. Use a wide sampling, not just your friends or a few volunteers to avoid skewed data. You want as much diversity possible to get accurate information. Obviously, if you want information about a certain group, you survey a diverse section of that group.
2. Make your survey short. You want to be very specific to get the desired information.
3. Make sure your question(s) are clear and logical. Fallacious logic leads to incorrect conclusions. Consider beta testing your questions with a few different people before you send out the survey.
4. Devise a consistent method to measure response data. If you have a rate something from one-ten, then keep that same method throughout the survey.
5. Once you have gotten your responses, evaluate them to see if the results seem likely. You could possibly compare them to other academic studies to see if they show the same trends.
6. When you cite your survey, explain your methodology and sample group.
7. Surveys and interviews can be good sources, but it is wise to follow up with quantitative information that supports your results. Having multiple sources that say a similar thing helps reinforce your data.

Go to experts on the web.

Wikipedia **bibliographies**:

A **bibliography** is an organized list of sources used in a document. Do a keyword search in Wikipedia. Once you get an article, scroll to the end of the article to the references. There might be useful books or articles in the list of sources used. Peruse these to discover relevant sources for your paper.

Government and university sources:

These can be full of current information on your topic. Both the government and universities conduct extensive research. They end their URLs with .gov or .edu. However, do not be fooled by websites that look valid but aren't. Anyone can use these endings; they aren't limited to certain entities. Always check who is providing the information before using it.

Online books or databases.

Often you can find peer-reviewed sources online. Google Scholar and JSTOR are a couple examples.

Use caution when doing an online search.

As you know, the web contains all kinds of misinformation. You need to investigate the credibility of any source you are considering. Keep in mind the possible problems with using these kinds of sites.

Websites from searches:

Often these are biased, promotional, or commercial. Be sure to know who is providing the information and why before using.

Blogs or other opinion sites:

Obviously, these sites are not reliable since they are personal. If the writer includes a bibliography, it is better to use one of those sources instead.

Commercial, political, religious, or other biased sites:

As a researcher, you want to stay impartial; therefore, avoid any sites with a particular point of view, which is what we mean by [bias](#). Sometimes it is tricky to tell if a site is biased. Usually a quick search can tell you. Look for reviews, business ratings, and warnings.

Keep copies of your sources!

It's a good idea to download, email to yourself, or print your sources. First of all because database URLs often change for security reasons. Secondly, you'll have the copies in case you need to submit them to your instructor or use them as proof of your research.

Collect sources in a [working bibliography](#).

Rather than immediately reading and taking notes, gather a selection of sources on your topic first. Then you can skim through them to determine their usability. Set aside the ones that are not useful.

Collect all of your sources in one place in a working bibliography. You can store them on slides, docs, storage drives- whatever works best for you.

When you find a potential source, note the **author, title, provider, URL or DOI** number, and why you thought it might be a good source. This will help when you document and write your works cited page. It will also come in handy if your teacher assigns an annotated bibliography.

4.1.5: Evaluate

Evaluate sources for accuracy and usability.

When you use researched sources, you want it to be **reliable, relevant, up-to-date, and trustworthy**. Databases provide these kinds sources, but sometimes you will need to search online. Using old sources or misinformation in a research paper shows carelessness. Taking the time to ensure your source's credibility is a good habit that shows you care about your writing and your reader.

Evaluate online sources

Method 1: The CRAAP test.

Use the CRAAP test to determine if a source is credible. The [CRAAP test](#) was originated by Sarah Blakeslee and other librarians of the University of California at Chico's Museum in 2004. Since then, educators and students have used it to determine credibility of thousands of sources.

CRAAP stands for currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose.

Currency: Information should be relatively recent and up-to-date.

- Determine if you need recent information or if older information will work. For example, a paper on The French Revolution, older sources might be appropriate.
- Find the date it was published. Most often, you'll need information posted in the last ten years. You will want more current sources if your topic is technology, medical research, or other fast-growing industry.
- Look for updates or revisions. Updates might indicate that they are providing the latest information.
- Check to see if it is being kept up and all the links work. Be suspicious of links that are broken or trigger your security software.

Relevance: Information should fit your needs.

- Make sure the website or information relates to your topic and research question. Don't get distracted or overwhelmed by finding information outside your needs.
- Determine who the information is for. Is it a broad audience? A specific group?
- Check to see if the information is accessible to you. Is it at your reading and comprehension level? Start with general information before going to specialized or academic sources.
- Confirm you need this information. Do you have sources on this information already? Does this one say anything new?
- Verify that this information is appropriate for your project and that you can cite it. If you can't find important information like who published it, don't use it.

Authority: Use information from credible sources.

- Determine the author, publisher, poster, or sponsor. Beware of people who spout opinions and websites that sell something. Authors are usually found at the top by the article title or bottom underneath the article. Use the ABOUT link if you can't find an author.
- Find the credentials of the author or the affiliation of the information provider. Make sure they have the authority to write about the information presented. You might have to conduct a short search to find out who the provider is.
- Verify that there is contact information. Credible sources should be available to help or answer questions. Be suspicious of websites that want to avoid contact.
- Check the URL. How does it end? Look for .gov or .edu. Organizations (.org), aren't necessarily reliable. Some organizations are biased or from unfavorable groups.

Accuracy: Sources should be reliable, truthful, and unbiased.

- Determine where the provider got their information. Did they copy it from somewhere else? Where did they get it? You may find yourself in a rabbit hole of borrowed information.
- Check to see if the information is supported. Look for footnotes, bibliographies, citations, research, or surveys. Credible sources are transparent in where and how information was found.
- Verify the information from personal knowledge or other sources. Multiple sources should say the same things.
- Check the language used. What is the tone of the source? Does it rely too much on pathos? Is the language objective, formal, or conversational? Are there grammar or usage errors?

Purpose: The reason the information is published or posted.

- Determine the objective of the information. What is the reason it is there? To sell something? To entertain? Inform? Teach? Persuade?
- Check for transparency. Is it clear why the sponsor/author is putting it there? Can you determine who the provider of the information is? What are they trying to accomplish?
- Decide what kind of information is there. Is it slanted? Propaganda? Is it objective and factual? Or is it someone's opinion?
- Confirm that the provider has no ulterior motives. Are there any beliefs or ideologies associated with the website? Is it politically biased? Is it meant for a particular group? Who is that group?

More information can be found in this video from the library at the University of Michigan Flint. [CRAAP test video](#)

Exercise 4.1.5.1

Use the CRAAP test to determine if this site is credible. [Website for evaluation](#) Would you use it for a research paper?

Method 2: Lateral reading.

Lateral reading is the method fact checkers use to determine whether a source is credible or not. Creators can make websites look authentic, and it can be difficult to determine using a method like CRAAP. Lateral reading is a useful way to check for fake sites, misinformation, or biased groups. Instead of examining the website, lateral reading has you go outside the website to find other references or articles to determine credibility. You are basically researching that source.

1. Start by opening a new tab.
2. Do a search on the article title or sponsor of the website. You can usually find it in the URL.
3. Scan the hits you receive. You should get results like a Wikipedia entry, websites on similar topics, blogs, or videos.
4. Sometimes you can determine credibility just from the headlines in these hits. Sometimes you need to do a little more work.
5. Open any of the articles that came up in your search. Look for something that talks about your source.
6. Be careful here. Sometimes you will find other people discussing the same topic or ideas. They may be just as or more biased than your first article. However, this may be useful. If these websites are suspicious, then your article is likely questionable too.
7. If you need more assurance, open another tab with the relevant Wikipedia entry.
8. You could skim what is written, but it may be faster to scroll to the bibliography. The sources there may reveal potential problems within the article titles.
9. If you still aren't sure, open a new tab and conduct a new search with another part of the website. If you searched the name of the website, search the article, sponsor, or author this time.
10. If you want to double check, open a new tab and consult a fact checker like Politico or Snopes.
11. Try searching the article title, topic, sponsor, or similar groups. You might get a different but similar article to the one you are researching. Your search results should show how reliable similar topics or sponsors are.
12. Though lateral reading seems like a lot of steps, the fact is, you probably won't need to use all of them. However, keep searching until you are positive; some websites are very deceptive! You do not want your argument supported by false information.

Exercise 4.1.5.2 Lateral reading

Go to [this website: dhmo.org](https://www.dhmo.org). Use the CRAAP test to determine if this is a good source for a research paper. What is your conclusion? Should you use this site for a paper? Why or Why not? Next, read laterally for the same purpose. What did you find out? Which method was more efficient for this site?

Read credible sources.

Actively read sources and annotate.

Once you have acquired some sources (more than your required amount), you can start reading and taking notes.

Skim your source first.

Look for words related to your topic. Then determine if it is worthwhile to read closely.

Summarize.

Summarizing ensures you understand the information. It is difficult to sum up what you don't understand. Break your source into sections before you start. You will find it easier to deal with the information in smaller chunks. This is especially helpful for more challenging sources like scholarly articles.

Annotate.

Write comments, questions, or related ideas in the margins. Be consistent in how you comment so they are more meaningful.

Some things you might annotate:

1. Key topics and ideas
2. Statistics or studies
3. Vocabulary you may want to look up.
4. Charts, graphs, or illustrations
5. Quotes you may want to include.
6. Anything in bold or in a sidebar

Avoid over-highlighting.

You don't want an entire text covered in color. Use other methods like circling, underlining, or mind mapping. Refer to the link on [annotation](#) from the University at North Carolina Chapel Hill.

Taking notes.

Once you have thoroughly read the sources, it is time to take notes.

Keep all of your notes in one place. Each note should have **the works cited information and whether it is a summary, quotation, or paraphrase** (see below). You can write your notes by hand on note cards or keep each note on a Google or PowerPoint slide. The advantage of using note cards is that you can physically move your cards as you organize.

Recording what kind of source you have saves aggravation later. Writing down the type of note will take a little time, but it could save you time later. If you are working and forget whether you copied it word for word or not, you will need to re-read your source to find out. This could take hours! Having it written in your notes streamlines the process.

Summaries.

A [summary](#) is a broad overview of evidence. In your own words, you describe a lot of details in a few sentences. You can summarize studies, experiments, legal documents, or other large chunks of information. Remember to document every summary. Do not forget to check for and include the page numbers.

Paraphrases.

A [paraphrase](#) restates a short piece of information into a similar sized section. Like a summary, you use original words, phrases, and organization. Paraphrased information is written into the text of your paper and cited. Always compare it to the original to be sure it is not too close to the original.

Paraphrases can be tricky. You need to say what the original source says without repeating any part of that source. The best way to do this is to read the information several times, put the source to the side, and write what you remember. Once you're finished, check that your paraphrase doesn't repeat any of the original.

If you need to use exact words from the source, surround them with quotation marks so your reader knows where they are from. Sometimes you will encounter industry jargon or technical terms that have no synonyms. This is called [shared language](#). Since there is no way to re-phrase them, it is acceptable to use those terms.

You must cite every bit of information that you learned from a source - no matter how small. Anything you did not know before you started researching this project must be cited!

Quotations.

A [quotation](#) is a sentence or two written word for word from the source. Do not overuse quotations. Your argument should not be one quotation after another. So not let your sources speak for you. They are there to back up your ideas.

You may add quotations when the wording is profound, expertly stated, or is from an expert in the field. Keep long quotations to a minimum. Paraphrase if you are using the quotation for added information that you can explain yourself. Or, paraphrase most of the information and quote the most important part. Set the quoted part off with double quotation marks. Balance the number of quotations with the number of paraphrases.

Avoid [dropped quotes](#). Quotations should begin with an introductory phrase called a [signal phrase](#)*. Once you have added your quotation, explain *how* the quotation supports your claim. If you do not introduce your quotation with a signal phrase, it is called a dropped quote. Do not leave your reader to figure out why you added that specific quotation. Your reader can only read your words, not your mind.

Some example signal phrases:

Example 4.1.5.1

- In her award winning book, *Research is Fun*, Dr. Anita License claims, “....”
- Carl Crabapple states in his article called “Plagiarism from Paraphrases is a Problem,” that “...”

Keep in mind that the signal phrase is there to help your reader find the information on the works cited page. The words in your signal phrase should match the first words of your works cited entry.

- If your source has an author, use that in your signal phrase.
- If there is no author, use the title of the article, book, or web page.
- Do not use the provider as in, “The New York Times article says...”
- Do not be vague such as, “The author of this article argues...”

Use a verb that indicates what the author of the source is doing. You don't have to use “states” or “says” every time you add a quotation. This link is a list of verbs you could use.

Most students know the importance of evaluating and critically reading their sources. They want to do a good job, but they end up getting behind and needing to hurry. It's easy to procrastinate when you need to read sources and take notes. It takes energy! That is why it is better to start early, schedule time to work, and do a small amount at a time. Dividing a large task into smaller parts always makes it more manageable. When tasks are more manageable, you can take your time, pay attention to details, and do the best job possible.

Note: Additional resources.

"Signal Phrases." Berkshire Community College Learning Center, pdf., [https://www.berkshirecc.edu/academics/academic-support/writing-](https://www.berkshirecc.edu/academics/academic-support/writing-center/resources/signal_phrases.pdf)

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4.1.6: Manage

Manage information within written texts honestly and appropriately.

As a scholar and researcher, maintaining [academic integrity](#) is important. A poorly documented paper suggests to readers that you are not trustworthy. It also signals that you care little about your reader or your reputation as a writer. Ethically, it is problematic because you are being negligent with other people's intellectual property. An honest researcher always pays attention to detail when documenting their work.

Documentation.

[Documentation](#) is an accepted method (MLA or APA) of explaining where and from whom you got information imbedded into your research paper. You must always tell your reader where you get the information in your writing, whether it is quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. When someone puts information online, they own that information. It is their [intellectual property](#). If you do not document your sources, you are stealing their words and making them seem like yours. This is [plagiarizing](#).

Think of this way. What if your favorite musical artist came up with a fantastic melody. Then some other artist used the same melody without permission. They would be in trouble, right? This might lead to a lawsuit and a lot of bad press. Your favorite artist wrote the music, so they should get to use it and say who uses it.

It's the same with writers. When they publish something, the writer obtains a copyright, which gives them the sole right of use.

Usually, when you want to use intellectual property, you need to get permission. Sometimes, online influencers get into trouble because they post copyrighted work without permission. However, there are instances when you can use intellectual property under [Fair Use Laws](#). Instructors or academics may use others' work if they give credit to the owner, and if they don't make a profit.

The [Copyright Act, section 107](#), describes these exceptions: "The fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means specified by that section, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright" (Copyright.gov). Nevertheless, even with Fair Use, you must disclose where you got the material.

Being an honest researcher means people will trust your work is original and documented accurately. It makes your work credible and shows you have integrity.

Avoiding plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when someone passes off another's ideas, organization, or words as their own. It does not matter if it is done intentionally or not; it is still plagiarism. Buying, borrowing, or taking written work from someone is also plagiarism.

Other forms of plagiarism include:

- Overuse of AI.
- Using part or all of a paper from a different class.
- Reusing your own paper.
- Using questionable research methods.
- Not citing a source.
- Not documenting a source correctly either in parenthetical citations or bibliographies.

Consequences of plagiarism vary from having to rewrite your paper to expulsion from school. It depends

on your school's Student Conduct codes. You should locate and read your school's guidelines to be sure you don't accidentally plagiarize.

To avoid plagiarism, pay close attention to details while taking notes and adding that information to your work. Embed quotations and acceptable paraphrases carefully. Accurately add the citations, and format your bibliography. Ask questions if you are not sure how to do these.

Reasons Why Documentation is Necessary

- You do not plagiarize because you acknowledge information from sources.
- You participate in the academic conversation of your topic.
- You show that your work is trustworthy.
- You demonstrate ethical research practices.
- Your reader can find your source for their research.
- You show that you've used solid evidence to support your ideas.

What Needs to be Cited

You need to cite anything you didn't know before starting research. This includes:

Direct quotations

Paraphrases

Summaries

Tables, graphs, charts, or outlines

Any [infographic](#)

You don't need to cite [common knowledge](#), anything you knew beforehand, or your opinion on the topic. When in doubt, cite it just to be sure.

How to Document

Each academic discipline has its own way of documenting sources. The Humanities prefer guidelines from the Modern Language Association ([MLA](#)) while the sciences prefer those from the American Psychological Association ([APA](#)).

The [Humanities](#) primarily study languages, ideas, and cultures. These academics often build on others' ideas. Researchers in the Humanities need to find the information used in a document. That is why MLA uses page number in its citations. This way, they can find and use what was presented and cited.

On the other hand, the sciences, such as psychology, sociology, education, linguistics, and medicine, need to keep current, so they use years in their citations. Since scientific innovations and discoveries are always happening, so researchers want the most recent information available. People in these disciplines need to know when information is published to ensure currency.

Both systems have their own guidelines, but work similarly. They have three main sections:

Paper format: The paper, itself, is organized in a specific way. Each system has its own preferences for margins, font type, or headings. For example, APA generally uses a cover page and MLA doesn't.

Citations: Within the text are parenthetical, often called in-text, [citations](#) that reveal the provider of

the information. Along with the provider, MLA uses a page number while APA uses the year. Both use a signal phrase to introduce direct quotations and citations written within the text and set off with parenthesis.

Both have a **bibliography** that lists the sources used in the paper. MLA calls it a works cited page while APA has a references page.

We will use the Online Writing Center at Purdue University for the specific guidelines for each section.

APA – American Psychological Association

General information: [APA overview](#)

Paper format: [APA General Format](#)

Citations: [APA in-text citations](#)

References page: [Basic rules](#) Examples on following pages.

Sample paper: [Example APA paper](#)

Presentation: [APA slides](#)

Videos: [APA video playlist](#)

MLA – Modern Language Association

General guidelines: [MLA Overview](#)

Paper format: [General Format](#)

Citations: [In text citations](#) Examples on following pages.

Works Cited page: [Works Cited page](#) Examples on following pages.

Sample paper: [MLA paper example](#)

Presentation: [MLA power point](#)

Videos: [MLA playlist](#)

It is likely that your library has more information on both APA and MLA citation. If your school has a writing center, the tutors there are usually equipped to help you with any part of the documentation process. Do not be afraid to reach out to these resources if you need help.

Works Cited

"APA Style Workshop." Purdue Online Writing Lab. Purdue University, [purdue.edu](https://owl.purdue.edu),

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_overview_and_workshop.html

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"What is Common Knowledge?" *Academic Integrity at MIT: A Handbook for Students*. MIT.edu, <https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/citing->

[your-sources/what-common-knowledge/](#)

4.1.7: Present

Present gathered information by summarizing, synthesizing, and creating texts to share.

Once you have found sources, you will start putting your argument together. Consider how you will answer your research question and write a working thesis. Don't worry if it isn't perfect, it will evolve as you go along. You will use three kinds of critical thinking to turn your working thesis into a convincing argument.

Summarizing, Analyzing, and Synthesizing

As academic researchers, you are expected to bring your own ideas to your argument. Instead of repeating the sources you found, you will use develop your own ideas. You will summarize your sources to show comprehension. You need to analyze them to find important details that you can use, and then you will synthesize by using those details as evidence.

Summarize.

Writing summaries of your sources ensures you comprehend what you have read. You need to understand what is being argued so that you can accurately use them in your own paper. For long or complicated academic articles, summarizing smaller sections keeps everything manageable.

Summarizing should be a regular part of your critical reading and annotating skills.

If you are writing an annotated bibliography, you can use these summaries as part of your annotations.

Analyze.

Summaries explain *what* is said while an analysis asks *how*. You will need to explain the methods the author uses to make their argument. How do they organize their work? What kind of evidence is used? When analyzing sources for research you could ask:

1. What is the author arguing? How do they support their argument?
2. What kind of assumptions does the author make about this topic?
3. Who is the audience for this source? What is the purpose?
4. What is the evidence used? Is it effective in supporting the ideas presented?
5. How do the ideas presented relate to my research?
6. What conclusions can I make from examining this source?

Synthesize.

The process of synthesizing takes information from other sources and uses it to support your argument. This means you will use sources to support your claims. To do this, you decide what you want to argue. As you develop and organize your ideas, look for details from your sources that relate to your argument.

According to the University of Illinois Springfield writing resource center, synthesis is an important step in writing your argument because:

- It integrates information from a number of sources. This shows that you have done the necessary research to fully engage with a topic.

- Reading and analyzing multiple sources helps you understand the conversation around your topic. Synthesizing shows you understand the facets of that conversation and can connect those ideas to yours.
- Successful synthesis creates links between your ideas and the sources. This helps you write logically and makes your paper flow.
- Synthesis prevents your argument from looking like a list of copied and pasted sources.

Synthesis is a higher order process in writing—this is the area where you, as a writer, get to shine. It shows your reader you have thoroughly considered your research question and developed it into a logical argument. ([link to U of Ill. Writing Resources](#))

To synthesize for your paper, you:

Read different topic-related sources, take notes, and summarize each source.

1. Look through sources and notes to find key concepts. Look for repeated ideas.
2. Find relationships and draw conclusions about ideas among sources.
3. Take a position on the topic.
4. Organize the concepts to explain and support the claim.
5. Use and incorporate sources as evidence to support ideas.
6. Explain relationships between ideas and sources.
7. Organize the argument into a readable and comprehensible text.
8. Embed sources using an accepted documentation system.
9. Present or publish your argument.

An example of synthesis can be found here: [Example of synthesis from OWL at Purdue](#)

Conclusion

Like writing of all kinds, doing research and synthesizing information is a multistep process. Allow yourself plenty of time. Planning ahead is a key step in keeping on track and avoiding panic.

If you get lost or confused, ask someone to help. Colleges usually have a dedicated research librarian who loves to help students with their projects. Tutors in writing centers sit at their desks hoping a student walks in and asks for help. Asking for help is not a weakness; it's a way to learn.

Works Cited

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"Synthesizing Sources." Purdue Online Writing Lab. Purdue University, purdue.edu, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/research_overview/synthesizing_sources.html

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4.2: Questions for reflection

Research questions for reflection

1. How will you plan your next research project?
2. Is using databases to find sources harder or easier than finding sources on the Internet? Why or why not?
3. How can you determine if your thesis is argumentative?
4. How would you explain academic integrity?
5. What might be a good strategy for remembering how to document your sources?

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5: ARGUMENTATION

We have stated that messages are arguments; that is, when we present a message, we are trying to convince our audience to accept what we are saying. These are informal arguments that we use without really thinking about them.

In college, we use more formal arguments that usually contain a claim supported by evidence. Nevertheless, there are different types of arguments with their own purposes. The following chapter describes several types of arguments that you might be asked to write in college.

Chapter goals:

- Understand the beginnings of formal argumentation.
- Recite the main parts of any argument.
- Write an argumentative thesis statement.
- Know the differences among classical, Rogerian, definition, and causal analysis arguments.
- Identify the organizational patterns of each argument.
- Be able to write the different types of arguments.

5.1: Classical Argument

5.2: Rogerian Argument

5.3: Evaluative Argument

5.4: Definition

5.5: Causal Argument

5.6: Policy Proposal Argument

5.7: Questions for reflection

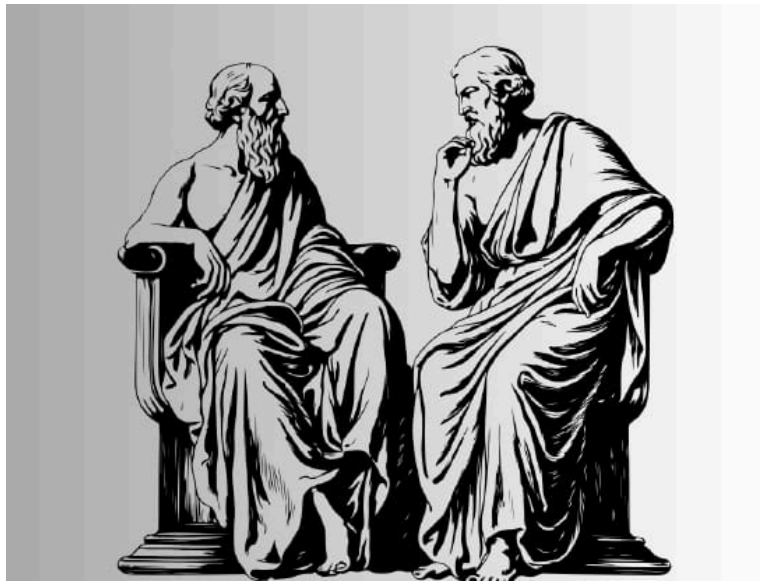
5.1: Classical Argument

B. Classical or Aristotelian Argument

The ancient Greeks loved to argue. They loved nothing better than to stand around the forum debating philosophy, history, or other pertinent topics of the day.

One philosopher, Aristotle (384–322 BCE), decided to write a [treatise](#) about the process of argumentation. Scholars and teachers have used the ideas presented in his work, *Rhetoric*, ever since. It was Aristotle who coined the phrase, “the art of persuasion” as the definition of rhetoric. He also devised the rhetorical triangle, situation, and appeals.

Another thing Aristotle discussed was the method and organization of argument. We call this organization [Classical](#) or [Aristotelian](#) Argumentation. The Classical Argument he described is divided into parts:



Exordium – The opening of the argument.

Narratio – Context of the topic to be argued.

Proposito and Partitio – The claim of the argument written in a thesis.

Confirmatio and/or Refutatio – The evidence or support for the claim and a counter argument that explains other viewpoints.

Peroratio – A conclusion that reviews the argument and explains its significance.

If the definitions of these terms seem familiar, they should. We often organize academic essays using these ideas.

More information can be found at [OWL.purdue Classical Argument](#).

These steps may seem familiar if you have ever seen a trial or participated in debate. We may not use the Latin words, but this process is used often in speeches or essay writing. Let's examine a couple famous speeches to identify the parts of a Classical Argument.

Examples of famous arguments:

A well-known example is Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. [Transcript of King's speech](#) (Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History)

Another is "The Gettysburg Address" by Abraham Lincoln. [Transcript of Lincoln's speech](#) (PBS)

Exercise 5.1.1

Examine the transcript of either King's or Lincoln's speech (see above links). See if you can identify the 5 parts of a classical argument.

Essay Organization

An outline of a classical argument essay might look like this:

I. Introduction

- A. Opening statement.
- B. Context/conversation around topic
- C. Thesis with stance and a preview of main points

II. Body

- A. Multiple paragraphs that look like the following.
 - 1. Transition and topic sentence
 - 2. Elaborate on topic sentence.
 - 3. Evidence and analysis
 - 4. Evidence and analysis
 - 5. Conclude by explaining relevance to thesis claim.

III. Counterargument

- A. Summary of opposing viewpoint(s).

IV. Refutation

- A. Response to each point of opposition.
- B. Refutes the point by showing weakness or illogic of point.
- C. Reiterates the argument's point.

V. Conclusion

- A. Sums up the argument.

B. Explains the significance to the audience.

C. Possible call to action.

Student example with comments: Link here: [Sample Classical argument](#) (Excelsior OWL)

Exercise 5.1.1

Write a short classical argument convincing your friend to go to a movie you like. For your evidence, choose elements of the movie that will persuade your friend to go with you.

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5.2: Rogerian Argument

Introduction

Aristotle's arguments persuade by taking a position and defending it with evidence. Even though classical arguments acknowledge other ideas, the emphasis is on the writer's stance and evidence. The expectation is that the reader will be persuaded and adopt the writer's viewpoint.

Psychologist [Carl Rogers](#) developed an argument with a different goal. Instead of confrontation, he wanted collaboration. So, he developed the Rogerian Argument, which emphasizes understanding and recognition of both perspectives to find common ground between them.

Both sides present their positions with evidence, then the opposing sides look for places where they might agree. Then they work together to find a compromise.



Figure

:

[Creative Commons Attribution 2.5](#)

Black and white sketch of Dr. Carl Rogers.

This may seem like a strange kind of argument until you think about times when you have had to negotiate to get something. Perhaps you want to go to a movie with friends, but don't know which one to see. Everyone has an opinion, so you have to work together to find one for all to enjoy.

Rogerian arguments are also helpful in other ways. Instead of proving your ideas to be true, the goal is to have a conversation and gain understanding of different perspectives. This type of argument can often be seen in the workplace where employees need to work together to solve a problem.

A Rogerian argument essay is organized in a specific pattern.

Introduce the problem.

1. The thesis of a Rogerian argument can be presented anywhere in the essay. It should contain the problem, both sides, the common ground, and the compromise.
2. Acknowledge the viewpoints of the other side. Each section of the body can be several paragraphs long with evidence from research to support ideas.
3. Explain your point of view without being forceful. You don't want to alienate the other side.
4. Find places where the two sides agree or could agree with a little change. Try to find the middle ground while remaining respectful of the other side.

5. Conclude by presenting the compromise and explaining how it benefits both sides.

Video explanation of the Rogerian Argument link here: [Rogerian argument video](#)

Outline.

I. Introduction of the problem.

The thesis can also be stated here.

II. Background information – the current conversation surrounding the topic.

III. Opposing side- stance

A. Reason 1

B. Reason 2

C. Reason 3

D. Reason 4

IV. Writer's side- stance

A. Reason 1

B. Reason 2

C. Reason 3

D. Reason 4

V. Find middle ground- places where both sides overlap or could agree with a little change.

VI. Compromise- a solution that satisfies both sides. Thesis may be stated here.

VII. Conclusion.

Review the problem, both sides, and compromise. Explain how it is good for both sides and the significance of the solution.

Example

A student paper with comments can be found here. Link: [Example Rogerian argument](#)

Exercise 5.2.1

What do you think about Rogerian arguments? Where might you use this kind of argumentation in real life? Write a short conversation where you might argue like this.

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5.3: Evaluative Argument

D. Evaluation arguments

How many things have you evaluated so far today? In almost any decision you've made, you've done some sort of informal evaluation. This might be what to wear, eat, transportation to take, social media to use, or movies to see. We like to watch reality shows where people are evaluated on skills such as baking, singing, dancing, or surviving. We also spend hours watching, evaluating, and debating which of our favorite teams is the best. Life consists of one assessment after another.

In college, you'll write [Evaluation Arguments](#) where you will need to justify the judgement you make. To do so, you will choose or be given the [criteria](#) you need to make a judgement. Likely, you'll have to present that assessment in writing or speaking. You will need reasoning and evidence to support your evaluation.

When you write an evaluation, you are making an argument that claims to know the correct [assessment](#) of thing you are evaluating.

As in all other arguments, your assessment (claim) is stated in a thesis statement, which is supported in the rest of the paper.

Unlike other essays, you will need to do some preliminary work before you even start the writing process.

Steps to write an evaluation argument

1. Understand the assignment, audience, and purpose.

You need to understand what type of project you are doing, the parameters of the project, who it is for, and why. Each discipline has different reasons for wanting an evaluation essay. Therefore, it is important to understand exactly what your instructor wants before you begin.

2. Establish the criteria that you will use to evaluate.

Evaluation requires making a appraisal of something's quality, quantity, use, or looks.

In order to judge something, you need to have something that helps you measure the item being considered. You also need to know what degree or which facets of those things need to be measured. These determinations are the criteria you will use to make and support your argument of evaluation.

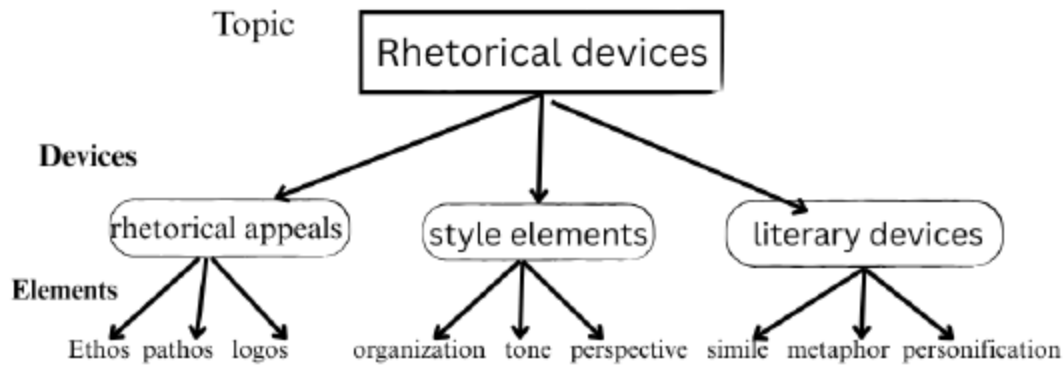
Your criteria needs to be relevant to the thing being evaluated and something you can observe or determine. If you were to evaluate a streaming service, you might look for cost, number of selections, language choices, accessibility, or ease of use.

3. Examine the item to be appraised closely.

Before you can think about evaluating something, you must carefully scrutinize each element of that thing. If you are expected to evaluate a text, that means closely and critically reading it.

4. Analyze the text by focusing on the specific elements that you will evaluate.

If you are assessing a text, you need to establish what parts of the text you will focus on. For example, you could evaluate a text by rhetorical devices like be rhetorical appeals, style choices, or literary parts. From there, you might break those into even smaller elements. For our example, rhetorical appeals would be ethos, pathos, and logos.



5. Measure those elements by each criteria that you have established.
6. Maintain objectivity and balance as you evaluate.
7. Write a final judgement and the reasons for your evaluation. This will become your thesis and roadmap for the main points of the essay.
8. Outline and draft your essay.
9. Get feedback and revise.
10. Proofread and edit.

Exercise 5.3.1

Write a paragraph long movie review evaluating a recent movie that you have seen. Choose at least 2 criteria and evaluate the movie using those criteria. Some possible examples of criteria are acting, special effects, plot, character growth, music, videography, directing, genre, or violent or sexual content. If you'd like, you can give the movie a rating such as bags of



popcorn from 1 for bad - 4 for great.

Example 5.3.1

Here is an example of an annotated evaluative argument: [Example evaluative argument](#). This is from Anna Mills' book *How Arguments Work*, Harrisburg Area Community College.

This video explains evaluative essays well. Link here: [How to Write an Evaluation Argument](#)

Media Attribution

Image 1: Miller, LauraLee. "Evaluation analysis chart." designed using Canva, Canva.com, <https://human.libretexts.org/@api/>

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5.4: Definition

Introduction

Sometimes, you need to figure out what a thing is. One way to find out is to get a general definition from a dictionary, encyclopedia, or reference book. These are definitions that we generally accepted as the correct ones. There might be variations, but we trust that we have an accurate definition.

For example: If I say the word skyscraper, you might envision One World Trade Center, but I might think of the Empire State Building. Someone else might think of The Burj Khalifa in Dubai or someone might recall a building in their hometown. Yet, all of these structures meet the formal definition of a skyscraper.

Sometimes, however, a simple definition is not enough, and we need an [extended definition](#) of some sort. Often the things that need to be defined are concepts such as happiness, racism or complex ideas such as artificial intelligence. An extended definition elaborates the qualities of the word. It may include the thing's elements or connotations. Some extended definitions can be a unique or personal perspective.

A definition that lists its parts is an [example definition](#). You might use this type of definition for concepts that are hard to define so you use examples to show what the word means. So, if you want to define athletic, you might list different athletes who exemplify what it means to be athletic.

Occasionally, you might need to define something by what it is not. This is a [negative definition](#). To do this, you contrast the thing to another term that is different from it. To define humane, you might start with examples of what is inhumane.

Definition Arguments

If you are asked to write a [Definition Argument](#), you will write your own, unique definition to explain what you think about the word. You will explore many facets of the word being defined. You will consider how the thing works, its parts, or how to picture it. You could also think about the history or conversation around it. Plus, you could ask others' opinions or research the different aspects of it.

Once you have discovered all you can about the word, you will need to write your own definition and state it in a claim. This is what turns a simple definition into an argument. Other people might have different opinions, so you will need to provide sufficient evidence to support yours. You state your claim and evidence in a thesis statement.

Steps to write a definition argument.

1. Choose a topic.

If you can choose your own word to define, look for one that you can examine from multiple perspectives.

2. Find general information.

If you're unfamiliar with the word you're defining, the best place to start is with some reference resources such as a dictionary or encyclopedia. A textbook or other type of manual might also be helpful.

3. Formulate a general definition that you can build on.

Expect this definition to evolve as you explore the elements of your word. You may only have a vague concept, but that is still a place to start. Keep in mind that you're developing your own definition that differs from others in some way.

4. Search for sources that discuss what you are defining.

Look for information that discusses the word. Look for patterns, use, or examples that you can use for your definition.

5. Write a complete definition with your claim and evidence.

Your claim states the definition you've devised. The evidence lists the reasons or examples that support your claim.

Example claims:

1. When deciding who gets aid in a natural disaster, government leaders must measure the extent of the damage to the area and the people who live there.
2. The growing number of banned books and government lists of forbidden words illustrates the increasing acceptance of censorship.
3. Many people are avoiding fast fashion by buying high quality, secondhand, or re-purposed clothes.

Structure of a definition argument

I. Introduction:

A. Simple definition

B. Context of the definition

C. Claim with evidence.

II. Explanation of your definition.

A. What it is.

B. Its properties.

III. Multiple paragraphs of evidence to support your definition.

A. Transition/topic sentence. Property 1

B. Evidence

C. Analysis

D. Concluding sentence

Repeat for each property.

IV. A counter-argument or discussion of other perspectives.

V. Conclusion:

Explain how your definition works in its context.

Example 5.4.1

Example essay with comments. Link here: [Definition argument](#) from Excelsior OWL

Writing a definition may seem a bit complex, but it is a good way to express your opinion by defining the term as you see it.

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5.5: Causal Argument

Introduction

We see relationships of cause and effect every day. You push the snooze button one too many times, so you're running late. Because you are late, you don't eat breakfast, which causes your brain to be foggy. Because you are not thinking well, you do poorly on your math test. One action causes a state of being, which causes another action or state of being. And so it goes.

Students are often asked to write cause/effect papers because of the prevalence of cause/effect relationships. That is, you see it in history, science, social sciences- almost every discipline. When we write about cause/effect relationships, it helps us think critically about the things around us and the consequences of actions.

Causal Arguments

Causal Arguments make a claim about a cause/effect relationship. For example, a senator might argue for funding to provide free breakfast and lunch to school children. He claims it will result in healthier children, better test scores, and savings for parents. Others might argue that it is too big of a tax burden because too many social programs already exist.

The senator's argument, for school meals, explores the effects of feeding children free breakfast and lunch. It might be shown like this:

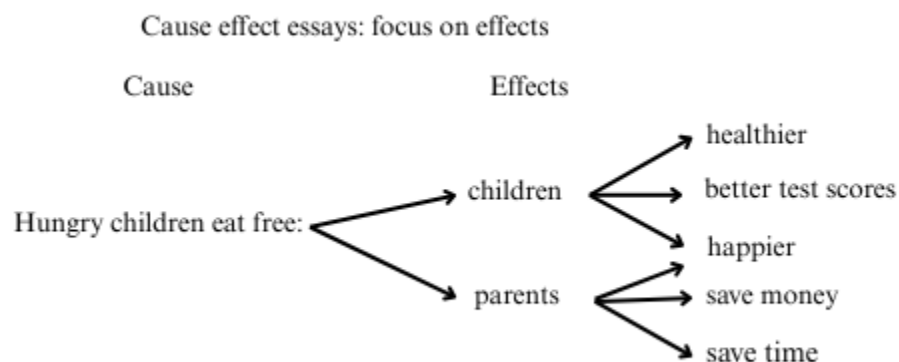


Figure: 5.5.1: Designed by LauraLee Miller with Canva.

The second cause/effect argument looks at a similar topic, but focuses on the causes of higher taxes. It can be graphed like this:

What are the causes of higher taxes?

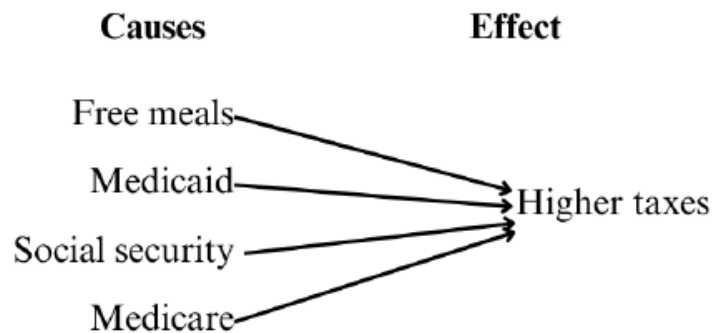


Figure 5.5.2: Designed by LauraLee Miller with Canva

Notice that these essays discuss either causes or effects. You will probably get an assignment to do this where you focus either on causes or effects. Not both. However, you can discuss the one you are not focusing on in your introduction. This would provide needed context for your thesis.

Most of the time you will be assigned essays that focus on either one or the other. However, some instructor may as you to write a causal chain. These arguments describe the causes of an event one by one until the end. An example causal chain is shown below.

A [causal chain](#) shows the links from one cause to an effect, which causes another effect and so on. The difficulty with this type of cause/effect argument is knowing when to begin or end. It seems you can always think of a preceding cause of succeeding effect.

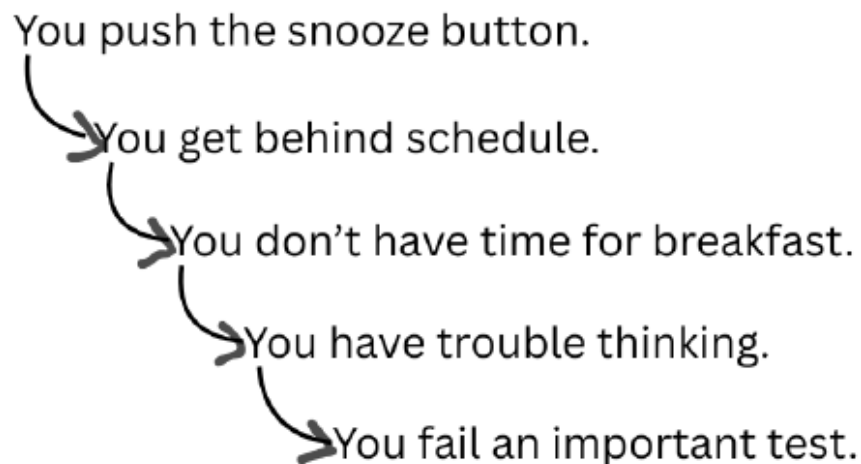


Figure 5.5.3: Designed by LauraLee Miller with Canva.

You might need to consider the [precipitating cause](#), which is the trigger that starts the entire chain. In our example above, the precipitating cause might be that you stayed up late, and that's why you pushed the snooze button the next day. But why did you stay up late? And so on. The causal chain can go backward or forward indefinitely. This is what makes them difficult to write, and why they are not assigned often.

In any causal argument, the cause and effect must be directly related. Just because two things (variables) happen at the same

time ([correlation](#)) doesn't necessarily mean one caused the other. Sometimes it's just a coincidence.

Suppose that in our example on free school meals, the children got healthier and did better in school. At the same time, teachers got an increase in salary.

Thinking that the students' health caused the increased salary is called [post hoc ergo propter hoc](#) or the "correlation does not imply causation" fallacy. The rise in pay happened at the same time the kids were able to eat at school, but that is not what caused the higher salaries. One may have happened before the other, but that does not mean the first caused the second.

Deducing that teachers got higher pay because a senator wanted to give children free meals is called [questionable cause \(or false cause\) fallacy](#). Between the senator and the salaries, there is a big gap that is not explained. It is not apparent if the one caused the other or not.

However, if teacher salaries were based on test scores, then you might have [causality](#). That's if the students got higher test scores from having better nutrition, which is result of them eating at school. You would need to show causality by explaining the cause and effect processes that make it so.

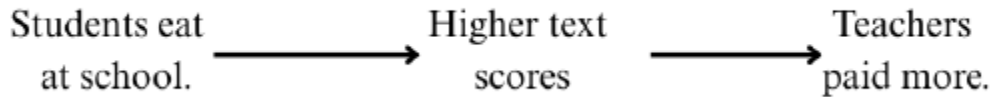


Figure 5.5.4: Designed by LauraLee Miller with Canva.

So, be careful to ensure that effects that you discuss have direct causes, and they are not just correlative.

Steps to write a cause/effect essay

1. Choose a topic. You need an event or situation where you can explain the reasons for or the consequences of the event/situation. Start with an event or situation and explore the causes of it. What led up to this situation? Or, go with an event or situation and explore the effects of it. What are the results of this situation? What are its implications if it continues?

2. Explore hypothetical causes or effects to make a predictive essay.

What could happen if this continues? What might have happened to get here?

Ask questions.

- What happened?
- Why did it happen
- What are the consequences?
- Did anything else happen?
- What were the conditions before the event?

3. Do some preliminary research to ascertain cause and effect relationships.

4. Generate some example of causes and effects.

Making a chart often helps to see the relationships better. You want to start with a cause and discuss the effects. Or you want to start with an effect and discuss the causes.

5. Do more research to support your ideas.

You might need to change them as you continue your research.

6. Make predictions about the causes or effects you have studied.

Think about possible outcomes if the situation or event continues.

7. Draw conclusions about the overall cause or effects.

What can you conclude about the overall cause or effect of the situation or event.

8. Write a thesis statement.

It should contain your topic and a claim about that topic, and its effects or causes. The claim could state the main cause or effect and then explore the other. Or, your claim can say something about the main cause or effect instead of simply what it is.

9. Organize your essay.

It might look similar to this:

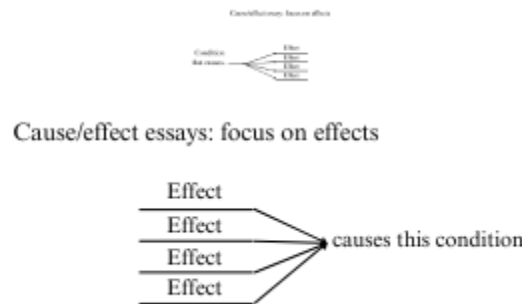


Figure \(\PageIndex{5}\): Designed by LauraLee Miller with Canva.

I. Introduction: Talk about the precipitating cause if you're discussing effects. Or, talk about the main effect and go to its causes.

II. Paragraph 1: Describe the current event or situation in more detail. What elements are important to know before exploring the causes or effects?

III. Next paragraphs: Each paragraph should explore a cause or effect. The order of paragraphs should be temporal to show the cause then effect progression. What happened first? After that? After that? Etc.

IV. Counter ideas: It is always good ethos to include counter or alternate ideas.

V. Conclusion:

End by refuting counter ideas or reviewing your claim.

Explain the overall implications of the causes or effects you have discussed.

Make a call to action or explain the importance of knowing these cause/effect relationships.

As you discuss your points, use transitions that show cause or effect relationships.

Transitions that show cause

- Led to
- Therefore
- Because
- As a result
- Due to

Transitions that show effect

- Consequently
- If /then
- Thus
- When
- Since/therefore
- So

9. Draft your essay.

As you develop your ideas, look for any logical fallacies in your cause/effect relationships.

10. Get some feedback.

11. Revise and edit.

Example 5.5.1

Example paper with comments. Link here: [Example Causal Argument](#)

Being able to discern cause and effect relationships is a helpful method of critical thinking to practice. We live in a constant stream of causes and effects, and being able to understand them can help us make decisions or predict what comes next.

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All Images: Miller, LauraLee. "Evaluation analysis chart." designed using Canva, Canva.com

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5.6: Policy Proposal Argument

Introduction

We've said that rhetoric is "the art of persuasion," and in an argument, the writer attempts to persuade their readers to think or do something. A proposal is an argument that attempts to get the reader to solve a problem or to agree to a solution. The problem can occur anywhere from school, to the community, a state, or the nation. When you write a proposal argument, you address a real issue or problem. You write to a specific reader, and your purpose is to persuade your reader to act.

Proposal Arguments

A [proposal argument](#) is structured much like an equation. "A" should do "B" because of "C." For example, if you wanted to change a city law to require ramps for every door in the downtown businesses, you could frame it as:

A (entity in charge) + **B** (should put ramps on doors) = **C** (reasons why ramps should be added.)

Example thesis statements.

Let's look at some different types of thesis statements for proposal arguments.

Example 5.6.1

First example:

The downtown merchants should provide a ramp for at least one entry to their business because they increase business and help the community.

Second example:

Entries with ramps enable the elderly, people with disabilities, and people with strollers to have access to their businesses.

Types of proposal arguments.

There are different types of proposal such as procedural and policy. Refer to your assignment to be sure you know what kind of proposal to write.

Procedural proposals

[Procedural proposal](#) talk about a procedure that needs to be changing. The procedures could be local, statewide, national, or worldwide.

Let's look at some examples.

Example 5.6.2

First example procedure proposal thesis.

La Crosse county should implement online voting to ensure all eligible voters can cast their ballot.

Second example of procedure proposal.

Students graduating from ABC High School should line up in the music wing before walking to the auditorium for commencement.

Policy proposals

A **policy proposal** seeks to change a current policy. Often people think of the laws when they of these proposals, but this kind of argument can apply to any type of policy. You can think of a policy as the actions a group of people take to further their cause or group. So you could write about anything that fits this general definition.

Let's take a look at some examples.

Example 5.6.3

First example:

All buses in the State of Minnesota should be fit with seatbelts to ensure the safety of school children.

Second potential thesis for policy proposal:

Instructors who discover misuse of AI by a student must speak to the student in person before implementing any consequences to ensure fair treatment of students.

Suggestions for writing a proposal

1. Think of a problem you'd like to fix.

It could be something you feel is important and needs to be changed. Determine what and how you want the change to occur. To find policies, look in school handbooks, city ordinances, state and federal websites, newspapers, or news magazines.

2. Write a claim that describe the problem and solution.

Start with the $A + B = C$ formula. You can revise from there to find the best wording.

3. Explain the reasons why the change is needed.

Demonstrate that there is a problem that needs to be fixed and describe the reasons in detail.

4. Explain the **feasibility** of the change and the positive results that will occur.

Consider whom or what the change affects.

- Exactly what will change?
- How much will it change?
- How will that affect the people involved?
- How will it improve a situation.

5. Provide researched evidence to show the answers to these questions.

Include relevant graphs, charts, or illustrations in your evidence.

Questions for revision.

According to Andrea A. Lundsford and John L., Ruszkiewicz, you should consider the following questions when review your draft.

Questions on your claim.

1. Does the claim clearly call for action?

Is the proposal as clear and specific as possible? Is it realistic or plausible?

2. Is the proposal too broad or sweeping?

Do you need to qualify parts of it? If so, how? Should you narrow the scope of the policy change?

3. Does the proposal directly address the problem that it intends to solve?

If not, how could the connection be strengthened?

4. Is the claim likely to get the audience to act rather than just to agree?

If not, how could it be revised to do so?

Questions about your evidence.

1. Is enough evidence furnished to get your readers' support?

If not, what kind of evidence do you need to add? Does any of the evidence provided seem inappropriate or otherwise ineffective? Why?

2. Is the evidence simply added?

Or is there clear explanation of how the evidence relates to the ideas being presented.

3. Are alternative views and objections readers might have considered?

Are they presented ethically?

4. What kinds of sources are cited?

How credible and persuasive will they be to readers? What other kinds of sources might work better?

5. Are all quotations introduced with appropriate signal phrases?

Are they blended smoothly into your sentences?

6. Are all visual or multimodal sources introduced and analyzed to explain their significance?

Questions for organization.

1. How does the opening get and hold your readers' attention?

2. Have you used a vivid image or example, a memorable anecdote, or a startling quote?

Have you avoided overused openers like definitions or rhetorical questions?

3. Is this organization or design effective?

4. Will readers understand the relationships among the claims, supporting ideas, and evidence?

If not, how might those connections be clearer?

5. Are ideas presented logically?

Does the order of supporting paragraphs make sense?

6. Are more transitions needed?

7. Would headings or graphic devices help?

Lundsford, Andrea A. and John L. Ruskiewicz. "Chapter 12, Proposals." *Everything's an Argument*, 9th edition, MacMillian Learning, pp 521-574.

Example 5.6.1

Example proposal outline from the University of California, Riverside linked here: [Example policy proposal outline](#)

Conclusion

All the arguments presented in this chapter have some elements in common. They all contain a thesis that takes an arguable position. They use evidence to support their position. They are clearly organized and follow the conventions of the genre in which they are written. It might be easier to stick to a strict format such as the five paragraph essay; however, advanced writers let the genre and content determine the organization and length.

As noted, arguments are all around us. Knowing how to express ourselves in a clear and succinct manner will serve you beyond your years in college.

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Lundsford, Andrea A. and John L. Ruskiewicz. "Chapter 12, Proposals." *Everything's an Argument*, 9th edition, MacMillian Learning, pp 521-574.

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5.7: Questions for reflection

Reflection questions for arguments

1. If it were up to you, what kind of argument would you choose to write?
2. Do you think learning Rogerian argumentation is helpful? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think it's important to use evidence from other sources when writing an argument?
4. Which argument do you think is easiest to write? Hardest? Why?
5. How would knowing how to write a policy proposal be helpful outside of school?

6.1: Prewrite

Pre-writing

Pre-writing is how you prepare for your project. There are a number of things you need to determine before you can start writing.

A. Understand rhetorical situation.

The acronym WOMPA* is a good way to remember the rhetorical situation. Ask yourself questions to specify each one.

Writer

Occasion

Message

Purpose

Audience

You are obviously the **writer**. You bring your own perspectives, ideas, style, and knowledge to everything you write.

The **occasion** is the reason for the writing. In college, the occasion is a writing an assignment for the instructor. Each assignment comes with different choices that you, as a writer, need to make.

Your **message** is what you want your audience to get from your writing. It includes the position you will take on your topic, your method of development, and the evidence you provide to support your ideas.

Your **purpose** depends on your assignment. The genre you are assigned determines what you need to do and how you organize it. You may also need to write other things such as applications, emails, reports, or social media posts. Each has its own purpose that you need to determine and write to.

You write to an **audience** who will read your work. This may be your instructor or your fellow classmates. You may also be assigned an imaginary audience who is related to your purpose. Every choice you may, words, content, style, tone, etc. need to be made with your audience in mind.

B. Invention.

Once you understand your assignment, it's time to start thinking about what you will write. We do this by **brainstorming** ideas. This is an exploration of possibilities, not drafting. This is the time to consider many options and then choose rather than picking the first thing that comes to mind. Often the first thing you think of is also the first thing everyone else thinks of too. There are several options for generating ideas. Try different ones and choose what works best for you. Some methods include free writing, mind mapping, listing, and others.

The University of North Caroline at Chapel Hill describes brainstorming techniques in greater detail linked here: [Prewriting ideas](#)

C. Determine your main message.

Finally, choose the main **message** you want to your reader to know. This can be a research question or a vague idea of what you want to say. You will continue to develop it as you continue the writing process.

"Brainstorming." The Writing Center. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, unc.edu, <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/brainstorming/>

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6.2: Organize

Organize

You will need to determine the general layout and details of your paper. [Organizing](#) is more than plugging details into a pre-set outline. You may need to change the number of paragraphs, switch the order of ideas, or find more evidence. Let your writing evolve and don't be afraid to rewrite or start again.

The basic essay structure is introduction, body, and conclusion. You may have learned the five paragraph essay in high school. While that might be an acceptable starting place, in college, you will be expected to use more sophisticated methods of organization.

Your content should determine your organization rather than squeezing everything into three paragraphs. The genre of your assignment influences organization. A narrative's structure differs from an argument or analysis while compare/contrast and cause/effect essays have their own framework. Additionally, you may use four, five, six, or more main points. You could also have two main points with multiple supporting paragraphs. You might need a definition or counter argument portion at the beginning or end of your paper. This all of these choices, a students do a big disservice to themselves if they limit their content to just three paragraphs.

Plan the structure of your paper.

Skeleton outline.

Some outlines can be quite complicated and confusing. An easier way to start is with a [skeleton outline](#). This is a bare bones structure of your paper. Start with a working thesis and a list of possible main points. Starting simply like this makes it easier to see the progression of ideas. You can also quickly change, add, or subtract details because you don't get bogged down in the mire of an intricate outline.

You might start by writing a working thesis, which is a preliminary version of your final thesis. You might have an idea already, if not, your research question might be helpful. You can turn the question into a statement that contains your topic and the position you are taking on it. Expect to refine this as your writing process continues.

Once you have a working thesis, you can figure out the body of your paper. To figure out your main points, you can ask questions about the position you have taken in your thesis. For example, a working thesis might say that homing pigeons should be used to share covert information between federal members of defense. If you ask "why," you will have a list of reasons, each becoming a main point. Asking "how" and would explain the process for implementing the pigeons. Each step becomes a main point idea.

As you figure out the details of your paper, you can use them to develop your outline.

Example 6.2.1

An example outline is linked here:[Example outline](#)

If you don't like outlines, you can also use your brainstorming tools, such as mind mapping, from the prewriting section to help.

Maybe neither outlines not brainstorming techniques are helpful for you. Then, you can write out a [messy draft](#) and do a [reverse outline](#). This will help you check that you have the most important components of your essay. You can also use a reverse outline during the revision process to check your organization and basic information.

To do a reverse outline, take your draft and plug it into an outline. This process will help you check that you have included all the important components of your paper. You might ask: Is your thesis arguable? What are your main points? When you are done, look at the rest of your information. Check if it is relevant to your thesis and argument.

Just like you can use mind mapping to organize your paper, you can use it like a reverse outline. Use what works for you.

Note

More information linked here: [reverse outline](#).

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6.3: Write

Write

Writing is our next step to powerful writing. Use the work you did during the organizational phase as you write your first draft. If you have a full outline, you'll easily be able to connect the ideas you've already laid out. Keep in mind that you may need to do this phase several times.

Once you've got an idea of how you want to organize your paper, you can write your first draft. Do not expect this draft to be the one you turn in; it should and likely will be, very rough and messy. When you start with a [messy first draft](#), you do not worry about making it sound good, about sentence structure, or grammar. The goal is to just start by putting down ideas and slowly add to your essay. Once you get some sort of draft, start revising by organizing the ideas, writing a thesis statement, developing paragraphs, and smoothing out sentences. You might need to write several drafts or to throw out large chunks of your first draft to improve your final draft.

As you're drafting, be sure to add your sourced information with the citations. Don't forget the page numbers! Use signal phrases for direct quotations. You may use parenthetical citations for paraphrases. As you add a citation, add that source to your works cited page. If the citations or works page aren't perfect, that's okay. You'll format and polish them up later.

Start with the body paragraphs.

Many people try to start by writing the introduction, but consider a more efficient way. Write your paragraphs first. Until you do so, you really don't know the content of your essay. Remember, we write to discover what we know or what we think. As we write, you may completely change what you thought you were going to write. Don't let this throw you as it's completely normal. In the long run, you'll get a better final draft for it.

Find your thesis.

Up to now, you've had a good idea of your main message. Now you want to write it into a formal thesis statement. Make sure you review what you've written so far as it may be a little different than what you thought. There are a number of ways you can format your thesis, but the most often used in college writing is topic + position + reasons.

Write the conclusion.

This may seem like a weird next step, but it really makes a lot of sense. Remember, you don't really know what you want to say until you say it. If you write your conclusion after your body paragraphs, you can just continue your ideas. Include your summary of the essay body and then explain why what you'd said is important and relevant to your reader. Remember, you're writing to them, so you want to keep them in mind as you write. Once you've written your conclusion, read it as objectively as you can. Then look back at your draft. Does what you've concluded match your thesis and content? You'd be surprised how often what you've written in your conclusion is really what you wanted to say all along. Now you have a choice. You can re-write your conclusion to reflect what you're written or you can change what you've written to match your conclusion.

Once you've written your conclusion, you'll have a better idea of what you want to say. It may or may not match what you thought you were writing about. You're ready to introduce your paper. Include sufficient information so that your reader understands your topic and where you are in the entire conversation about that topic. You see, a topic or issue does not exist in a vacuum. Instead, there are many different perspectives and ideas floating around regarding that topic. Think of an issue that's important to you. How many different opinions, sides, angles, causes or effects do people discuss? How many solutions are there?

Your job as a writer is to help your reader understand the general conversation around your topic before you can present your opinion or position on the topic. We call this context. To do this, you can think about the five W's and an H. Consider Who, What,

When, Where, Why, and How regarding your topic.

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6.4: Evaluate

Evaluate.

Once you've written your draft, it's time to take a step back to see how you've done. It can be difficult to be objective when [evaluating](#) your own writing. Using the rubric for the assignment can be helpful. You can also go section by section, and point by point, asking yourself, "is this pointing to my thesis?"

Getting feedback from others is an important and helpful step when drafting any writing. Professional writers have editors or other writers read and critique their work. This isn't always pleasant, but it's important to get feedback from a different point of view since we can't always read our own work objectively. In addition, other people may provide helpful ideas or other perspectives. When you receive feedback, consider it a way to improve your work and your writing rather than negative criticism. That's easier said than done, but know that the people who read your work, whether your teacher, your peers, or your friends, want you to do well and grow as a writer.

Peer reviews:

Most writing students will participate in [peer review workshops](#) in their classes. When done well, peer reviews can be very helpful. Hopefully your teacher provides sufficient guidelines to lead you through your workshop.

Sometimes students don't feel comfortable critiquing another student's work. They might feel they don't know enough about writing or don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. However, you are a member of the class community and have an objective and valuable opinion on your peer's paper. Here are a few suggestions for commenting on a peer's work.

1. Talk about the writing, not the writer.
2. Start by finding something that you like about the paper.
3. Make suggestions about clarity such as: "I'm not sure I get this part..." or "This is hard to understand for me." or "This could be clearer."
4. Ask questions. "I wonder if it would help to..." or "Does this mean..." or "Could this be explained a little more?"
5. Make a small suggestion. I think I'd add..." or "Maybe this could move to..." or "I'd take this out if it were me."

Another way to get valuable feedback is to take advantage of a in-person or online writing center. There are usually tutors trained in writing who can offer helpful suggestions. Be aware that their job is to give feedback on writing, not proofread or edit. They will not go through your paper and check the grammar. They will, however, look at your thesis, organization, paragraphs, and sentences.

Besides getting feedback on drafts, tutors at the writing center can help you throughout your writing process. They can help you choose topics, brainstorm ideas, organize your thoughts, think of a thesis statement, and help you with citations and bibliographies. So, don't be afraid to visit your school's writing tutors. They're probably just waiting for someone to come in and ask for help.

If your teacher has been kind enough to offer to read and comment on your paper, take advantage of it. When they do give advice, take it seriously. The same goes for when papers are returned with comments. Read them carefully and take them as advice for the next paper. If your teacher allows revisions after grading, then follow all the advice to improve your next draft. Instructors are very busy, so if they take time to give you feedback, appreciate it.

6.5: Revise

Revise.

Once you've gotten feedback, it's time to [revise](#). Remember, to revise means to go through and change large sections of your paper. Sometimes this is difficult. You worked hard on the first draft, and now you have to change or delete some of it. You might even have to rewrite the entire thing! However, revising, that is changing, deleting, rewriting, is how writing works. Every writer goes through the same thing, even professionals. It is how we improve our work and skill. Writing is hard! Isn't it nice to know that you don't have to get it perfect the first time?

When revising, start big and go small.

Paper organization.

Does the paper explain and support your thesis? Do all of your paragraphs point back to your thesis? Do your ideas flow from paragraph to paragraph? Are they in a logical order? Are paragraphs covering similar ideas together or do the topics of the paragraphs jump around? Do you need more information anywhere? Did you cram everything you wanted to say into three paragraphs instead of letting the content of the paper determine how many paragraphs to write?

Paragraphs.

Look at the organization of each paragraph. Does it contain a transition and topic sentence? Does the topic sentence explain the main point of the paper? Do you explain what you mean and offer evidence? Did you explain why the evidence is important or how it relates to the main idea of the paragraph? Do you have a conclusive sentence that explains how this paragraph supports your thesis?

Does your introduction prepare your reader for your paper in an interesting and relevant opener? Did you use ordinary openers like a question or definition or did you make it more compelling? Did you include enough background information so your reader understands your topic and perspective? Did you include a thesis statement that meets assignment requirements?

What is your conclusion like? Does it sum up your thesis and main points without repeating them word for word? Did you explain how the main points relate to the thesis? Did you explain why this topic is important or relevant to your reader? Does it end with a conclusive sentence so that the paper feels finished?

Sentences.

Take a look at your sentences. Do they get straight to the point or do they ramble? Can you clearly identify the subject and verb? Are they in active tense for most of your text? Do you use active verbs and precise details?

Check for common errors such as fragments, comma splices, or run-ons.

One of the best ways to check sentence structure is to read your work aloud. That way, your ear can tell you if it flows and makes sense.

If you're having trouble writing a sentence, stop for a second and take a breath. Out loud, ask yourself what you want to say. Then explain it as if you were speaking to someone else. Quickly write what you just said. Dictating what you want to say and then transcribing is another useful way to hear your writing. After all, writing isn't just for the eyes; it's for all of the senses.

Now, go back and revise if you haven't already and evaluate again. Do this as many times as it takes to get the result you want. Writing can be time consuming and require patience. Allowing yourself plenty of time helps alleviate the stress of having to hurry to meet a deadline. It also gives you a chance to take a break, relax, and regain your energy to continue.

Edit

Once you've decided you are finished revising, it's time to [proofread](#) and [edit](#). Proofreading reading through your work, looking for errors. A helpful way to proofread is to read your work aloud. Doing this will help you slow down so you can catch double words or [homonyms](#). You will also hear any thing that sounds odd like awkward wording or rambling sentences. Editing is polishing or fixing errors in the paper. It is the final check to be sure everything is in order.

Some of the things you should check are:

- Format/citations and bibliography.
- Punctuation and capitalization
- Spelling
- Grammar

Take advantage of editing software to help you with this. Keep in mind that these editors aren't always right, so double check every suggestion to be sure you have the correct information. Try to learn as you edit, so it takes less and less time as you progress in your writing.

Once you've done your editing, you are ready for the final read-through. A good way to do this is, again, to read it aloud. Another way is to read from the end. That is a good way to catch homonyms that a program would miss.

Publish.

Once you've finished, it's time to share your ideas with the world. This may mean submitting your work as an assignment. You might also share your work with your classmates in a peer review workshop.

Using the writing process might seem cumbersome at first, but once you use it a time or two, you'll notice that your writing becomes more efficient and of higher quality.

6.6: Questions for reflection

Reflection questions for the writing process

1. Which pre-writing strategies have you tried and which ones do you prefer?
2. Have you used an outline to organize your papers in the past? How might using one be beneficial for writing arguments?
3. What is hard about writing a bad rough draft? How do you keep yourself from revising as you work?
4. What are some ways to evaluate your own writing? Can you be objective about it?
5. Revising a paper can be time consuming and tedious. How can you make it worth the investment of time and effort?
6. Joan Didion said, "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear."

Didion is on to something there. As humans we need to make sense of our world and experiences. Writing, especially writing by hand, helps us in that process. When writing, we remember, reflect, and develop as writers and people.

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GLOSSARY

A

Abstract | A short summary of a research article or paper that gives you an overview of the article's main ideas.

Academic Arguments | Formal arguments presented in a college setting

Academic Integrity | Using honest and transparent methods of writing and/or research

Academic Journal | Journals are regularly published collections of scholarly articles

Academic Literacy | Includes ways you learn and improve reading and writing skills

Academic Writing | Writing that is formal, usually uses third person, and prefers active tense. You also write in present tense because as long as something is being read, it is current.

Accuracy | Information that can be trusted as factual and trustworthy.

Active Reading | Being actively engaged in a text through annotation and note-taking.

Annotate | Underlining, marking, adding definitions or notes, and writing in the margins while reading.

Annotated Bibliography | A list of sources that are relevant to a research topic and includes a citation and an annotation, which is a short summary of each source and how it relates to the overall research.

APA

| Stands for American Psychological Association. A method of documenting sources used primarily in the sciences and social sciences.

Argument

Academic Argument

| An assertion on a certain topic that contains a claim and evidence to support it.

Aristotelian Argument

Classical Argument

| The method of argumentation devised by Aristotle, which contains an claim, evidence, and a counterargument.

Assessment | The conclusion reached when conducting an evaluation

Authority | An expert or scholarly who is able to accurately write about a topic

B

Bias | Any entity or website with a particular religious or political point of view

Bibliographies | An organized list of sources used in a document

Boolean Operators | A Boolean operator is a special word used to connect keywords together in a search

Brainstorming

Invention

| The act of generating ideas for a piece of writing. There are various ways to inspire ideas, including mind mapping, listing, free writing, or talking.

C

Carl Rogers | An American Psychologist who wrote *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* where he outlined a method of argumentation that emphasizes understanding and acknowledgement both sides to find common ground.

Causal Arguments | Makes a claim about the causes or effects of a problem or event.

Causal Chain | Shows the links from one cause to an effect, which causes another effect and so on

Causality

Causation

| The act that makes something happen

Citations | Are indications of where and from whom information used in a research paper is originally found

Claim | A writer's assertion in an academic argument

Classical Argument

Aristotelian Argument

| The method of argumentation devised by Aristotle, which contains an claim, evidence, and a counterargument.

Correlation | The direct relation between two variables or events.

CRAAP test | A method to determine the credibility of online sources

Criteria | The chosen characteristics used to measure the quality or effectiveness of a text

Critical Reading | Includes asking questions, interacting with the text, and asking questions

Critical Response | Interprets the text and supports it from the reading.

Currency | Is how up-to-date something is

D

Databases | [A collection of subscription content that contains credible source information for students to use](#)

Deep Fakes | Digitally enhanced media

Definition Argument | A methodical and detailed explanation of what a thing is. There are 3 parts, the word to be defined, how it is classified or categorized, and characteristics that describe the word.

Digital Literacy | [Knowledge on technology, computers, searching online, using different apps and communication media.](#)

Disinformation | The intentional dissemination of false information.

Documentation | Is an accepted method (MLA or APA) of explaining where and from whom you got information imbedded into your research paper.

DOI | ["Digital Object Identifier." This is a unique code given to scholarly articles to help people find and access that source easily.](#)

Dropped Quotation | A quotation that is not introduced into a text with a signal phrase.

E

Edit

Editing

| A final evaluation of an essay where you look for missed errors or revision needs. A final check before for submission or publication.

Edited American English | A version of American English that is used in textbooks and academia.

Elements of Rhetoric | The things that make up the rhetorical situation- writer, reader, message, occasion, and context.

Encyclopedias | Contains general information on a broad number of topics.

Essays | A short piece of writing that conveys your message

Ethos | a writer who presents themselves as authoritative, trustworthy, and credible.

Evaluating

Evaluate

| The process of judging the clarity, effectiveness, or quality of a piece of writing.

Evaluation Arguments | An essay written to judge the quality, credibility, or effectiveness of a text.

Evidence | The reasons why a writer makes their claim.

Example Definition | A definition that uses examples to explain the word. These are often used for concepts or complicated words.

Extended Definition | A definition that is longer and more detailed.

F

Fair Use Laws | [The ability to use someone's intellectual property if it meets certain requirements outlined by the United States government.](#)

Fake News | Completely wrong “news” created to mislead people.

Feasibility | How well or easily something can be done.

Field Research | Research that you conduct yourself.

H

Homonyms | Two words that sound or look the same, but have different meanings.

Humanities | Are disciplines that study human cultures, languages, beliefs, or history.

I

Infodemic | When information spreads so fast and far that it is difficult to know the truth.

Infographic | A visual representation of information such as a chart, graph, or illustration.

Informal language | Language we use everyday.

Information Literacy | The ability to understand, find, evaluate, and use information.

Intellectual Property | Artistic work or an invention that someone creates, owns, and controls the rights to.

K

Keyword | [A keyword is a word or phrase that is a main concept of a research topic.](#)

L

Lateral Reading | A method used to determine whether a source is credible by doing quick Internet searches on the article or author.

Libguide | A collection of resources for your class or assignment curated by a librarian.

Literacy | The ability to read and write or competence in a specialized language.

Literacy Landscape | [A representation of the different types of information literacy that you encounter in school.](#)

Logos | Persuades by convincing readers that the message is sound and the evidence is reliable.

M

Media Literacy | [How we communicate without writing or speaking.](#)

Media/multimedia | [Items that are not text-based. These are usually audio or visual, such as images, DVDs, CDs, or vinyl records.](#)

Message

Argument

Communication

| In a rhetorical situation, the message is communication about a topic. An argument that contains a claim and evidence to support it.

Messy Draft

Messy First Draft

| [A terrible first draft that starts the drafting process. The idea is popularized by Anne LaMott in her book *Bird by Bird*.](#)

Metalanguage | Language about language; different areas of study have their own language.

Misinformation | The general term for false information whether intentional or not.

MLA | Stands for Modern Language Association. A method of documenting sources primarily used in the Humanities.

N

Negative Definition | A definition uses contrast to explain what the thing is not to explain what the thing is.

New Literacy | [The new ways you use information to learn.](#)

News Literacy | To distinguish social media ads from legitimate news stories.

O

Occasion | In a rhetorical situation, this is the reason or event which begins the communicating process.

Organizing

Organization

| Q method of determining the general layout and details of an essay.

P

Paraphrase | Restates a short piece of information into a similar sized section in original wording from a writer.

Passive Reading | To read for comprehension or entertainment without questioning.

Pathos | Pathos persuades by creating ties between the reader and writer.

Peer Review

Peer Review Workshop

| A means for students to read and respond to peers' essays. This is often used to provide feedback on rough drafts.

Peer Reviewed | [An article that has been rigorously reviewed by experts in a subject to ensure accuracy and quality.](#)

Permalink | [Permalink stands for "permanent link." Many databases have a permalink so students may access the article multiple times.](#)

Plagiarism | [Plagiarism is using someone else's words, ideas, or work without giving them credit.](#)

Policy Proposal | A proposal argument that attempts to solve a problem of an official policy.

post hoc ergo propter hoc

| "Correlation does not imply causation" fallacy. Just because two incidents happen close to the same time, it doesn't prove that they are related.

Post Read | A process that occurs after active reading that includes review notes and summarizing the text.

Pre-read | A short process of preparing to read actively.

Pre-writing | The first step of the writing process, which includes examining the rhetorical situation, invention, and thinking about the main message of your writing.

Precipitating Cause | The trigger that starts the entire causal chain.

Preliminary Research | The starting research done to get broad information or context.

Primary Source | [Original materials or firsthand accounts that come directly from the time period or event being studied.](#)

Procedural Proposal | A proposal argument that attempts to solve the problem of an official procedure.

Proofread

Proofreading

| Reading through a draft to check for needed revisions or catch errors.

Propaganda | People use rhetoric to manipulate or harm others.

Proposal Arguments

| An attempt to solve a problem by presenting the solution and the evidence why the solution will work.

Purpose | In a rhetorical situation, it is the reason and method for creating a communication.

Q

Questionable (or false) Cause | An incorrect conclusion that one thing causes another thing.

Quotation | A sentence or two written word for word from a source.

R

Read | Active and critical reading, which includes annotating, asking question, and taking notes.

Reader

Audience

| In a rhetorical situation, it is the person who receives the communication.

Relevance | In writing, it is information that directly relates to the topic being discussed.

Reverse Outline | A process of checking a rough draft for the necessary elements of an essay. After drafting, the writer fills in an outline with corresponding parts of their paper.

Revise

Revising

Revision

| The method of reading and making changes to a draft to improve it. This may require moving information around, deleting parts of the text, or completely re-writing sections.

Rhetoric | The ability to use language or images to communicate a message.

Rhetorical Analysis | An essay that looks closely at the persuasive language and techniques used by an author.

Rhetorical Appeals | The ways writers appeal to their audience, ethos, pathos, and logos.

Rhetorical Situation | Every time someone engages in writing.

S

Scholarly Article | [Articles written or produced by experts in a particular field or discipline.](#)

Secondary Source | [Information that is based on other sources, rather than firsthand experience or original research.](#)

Seven Pillars of Information Literacy |

[The steps an information literate person completes in the research process.](#)

Signal Phrase | Introduces the author and/or title of a quotation or paraphrase.

Skeleton Outline | A bare bones structure of a essay. Usually the thesis and main points are determined and structured.

Subject Headings | [Specific words or phrases used to describe the main topic\(s\) of an article or book.](#)

Summary | A broad overview of evidence written in few words.

Synthesis | A higher order critical thinking skill that creates new information from what already exists.

T

Text | Image or words that display an argument.

Treatise | A written formal and systematic study of a topic.

W

Web sites/web pages | [A website is a collection of related webpages that are linked together and share a common name Each webpage, is an individual document or page within a website.](#)

Working Bibliography | A collection of sources on a particular topic to potentially be used for a research project.

The Writer

Speaker

Communicator

| For this textbook, it is part of a rhetorical situation where someone creates a piece of writing. This is in place of the term "speaker" used by Aristotle in his book *Rhetoric*. Nowadays, some people prefer communicator as it covers both.

The Writing Process | A series of tasks that you use to complete a writing project.

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